Screen

48:3 Autumn 2007

issue editor
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cover illustration
La petite mort (François Ozon, 1995)

Two modes of prestige film

CHRIS CAGLE

In gauging the changes that Hollywood underwent during the postwar years, two scenes from 'quality' films released two decades apart are exemplary. In the first, *Dodsworth* (William Wyler, Goldwyn/United Artists, 1936), a series of six shots immediately signals classical film narration and elevated production values. Sam Dodsworth's (Walter Huston) entrance into the dining room of an ocean liner consists of an elaborate tracking shot interwoven with the crossing of extras behind his forward motion, then a low-angle, deep-space composition that morphs into a subtle crane shot of Dodsworth, before he is joined by Major Lockert (David Niven). The effect is to assert a narrational presence in excess of the characters, a point of view outside the action that, even if it does not tell the story in the way a third-person omniscient narrator does in literature, connotes a literary voice. Afterwards, a low-angle, deep-space shot of his wife Fran's (Ruth Chatterton) entrance highlights much of what distinguished the 1930s prestige picture: the modernist set design, giving a greater sense of solidity and grandeur than the sound stage sets actually possessed; the populated and fully furnished mise-en-scene; the somewhat experimental yet refined costume design; the elaborate lighting arrangement, keeping the star in full and flattering illumination, despite camera and actor movement. Finally, the last shot visually doubles the love triangle theme by framing Fran between the two men, a framing that is repeated throughout the film. In summary, both cinematically and thematically, William Wyler and Samuel Goldwyn have given what to them – and to audiences in general – was an appropriate treatment of work from a novelist like Sinclair Lewis, with his high-culture credentials. 'In the years that followed the Second World War', David Thomson offers, 'Wyler was Hollywood's idea of a great director – respectable, diligent, tasteful, a servant of stars and box-office

Screen 48:3 Autumn 2007
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doi:10.1093/screen/hjm031

potential, and a reliable master of big projects'.[1] As *Dodsworth* reveals, the same applied before the war. William Wyler was one of the classical Hollywood directors most associated with the prestige film. His projects generally had literary sources, 'serious' themes and lavish production values.

In contrast, *Marty* (Dilbert Mann, UA/Hecht-Lancaster, 1955) resists much of classical Hollywood's 'quality' style. In one famous scene, Marty (Ernest Borgnine) and his mother have a dinner conversation about Marty's marriageability. The dining-room set is striking in the severity of its low-key lighting and recalls the use B filmmakers historically have made of minimal lighting to disguise inexpensive sets.[2] Throughout the scene, fast film stock and heavy single-source overhead lighting leave very little of the room visible, just the table, the characters and part of a sideboard. Twelve mostly static shots last for two-and-a-half minutes; the scene consists of a few long takes containing much of the dialogue (shots 1, 7 and 12 last at least thirty seconds each) and a few shorter shot/counter-shot alternations done with a multiple-camera setup. Thus the action is blocked and shot much like a television show – no surprise, given that the source was neither a canonical play nor a grand historical subject but the anthology television theatre programme, *Goodyear Television Playhouse*. The telecast's director, Delbert Mann, directed the independently produced film, and its writer, Paddy Chayefsky, was known primarily for his writing for anthology programmes and for *Marty* specifically. The result was the maintenance of a television aesthetic. As Eric Barnouw argues about the anthology drama:

> To this close-up drama, live television brought an element that had almost vanished from film. ... Film had long been dominated by its own kinds of time, made by splices in the editing room. ... The manipulation of 'film time' offered creative pleasures so beguiling to film makers that they had virtually abolished 'real time' from the screen. Its appearance in long stretches of television drama gave a sense of the rediscovery of reality – especially for people whose only drama had been film.[3]

The film version trafficked in this 'real time' too: the previous scene, in which Marty, calling a woman to ask for a date, is shot in a continuous three-and-a-half-minute take, with the camera simply panning to follow Marty's movement, or tracking in for emotional punctuation. At an earlier point in Hollywood's history, this live-theatre aesthetic would have been read as 'cheap' and undesirable. *Marty* had a negative cost of only $400,000, and it is impossible to imagine a feature film so low in budget qualifying as a prestige film in the 1930s. In 1956, however, the film garnered four Academy Awards out of eight nominations and established a precedent for smaller-scale dramas from directors with theatrical and anthology television credentials. Rather than looking for cultural legitimacy in a Broadway play adapting a Nobel Prize-winning

1 David Thomson, *A Biographical Dictionary of Film*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Knopf, 1994), p. 832.

2 Brian Taves, 'The B film: Hollywood's other half', in Tino Balio (ed.), *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930–1939* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), p. 332.

3 Erik Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty: the Evolution of American Television*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 161.

novel, as *Dodsworth* did, *Marty* inverted the cultural touchstone by looking to a television show itself looking to off-Broadway theatre.

The aesthetic difference between these two films registers, in large part, in their divergent concepts of what 'serious' entertainment means and should be. In this area, Hollywood underwent a far-reaching transformation in the postwar years: newer genres emerged, such as the topical political drama, the pseudodocumentary, and eventually 'mature' Broadway adaptations aimed towards thematic, stylistic and topical importance; location shooting, contemporary settings and social critique gained a prominent place in US commercial cinema. Beyond this trend in quantity, the postwar years saw a qualitative shift in what counted as serious cinema, as the nature and role of the prestige film changed in Hollywood. When film historians speak of the prestige film in the studio years, they designate a production category surpassing the typical A film in its budget, treatment and subject matter. During the postwar years, however, another type of serious film came to prominence, one that can also claim the term 'prestige' picture since it speaks to, or elicits acclaim from, observers inside and outside the film industry. Where the *film industry* defined the prestige picture of the 1930s, *film consumers* defined the new type of prestige film. *Dodsworth* and *Marty* thus represent two modes of prestige film. The industrial mode looked outward, conspicuously, towards higher cultural forms to lend Hollywood narratives the aura of respectability. The socially-defined mode looked inward, internalizing an aesthetic and form of perception that itself was meant to be culturally more elevated. This analytic distinction is also a historical one: over time, the Hollywood prestige film transformed its overwhelming reliance on the *Dodsworth* mode of prestige cinema to the increasingly internalized middlebrow sensibility of the *Marty* mode. By the emergence of the 'New Hollywood' in the 1970s and 1980s, the literary adaptations and historical films deemed prestigious in the classical years had all but disappeared.

Key to this shift was a cycle of social problem films released between 1945 and 1949. A glance at the Academy Award's Best Picture nominations from this period shows examples from this cycle: *The Lost Weekend* (Billy Wilder, 1945), a 'gritty' expose of the problems of alcoholism; *Best Years of Our Lives* (William Wyler, 1946), a triptych of the problems facing returning veterans; *Gentleman's Agreement* (Elia Kazan, 1947), an indictment of anti-Semitism; *The Snake Pit* (Anatole Litvak, 1948), a plea for more humane mental healthcare; *Pinky* (Elia Kazan, 1949), a melodrama about racial passing in the South.[4] Their box-office and critical success led competing studios to produce more message films and, in the process, establish a new model for the socially-defined prestige film. This transformation was twofold. An industrial transformation of the prestige film emerged from the changing conditions of the film industry in the 1940s, particularly after World War II. Meanwhile, a larger cultural legitimization of the cinema created a receptive context that would champion the newer mode of prestige

4 Academy Awards: *Lost Weekend* – Best Picture, Director, Screenplay and Actor, 1946; *Best Years of Our Lives* – Best Picture, Director, Screenplay, Actor, Supporting Actor, Editing and Music, 1947; *Gentleman's Agreement* – Best Picture, Director and Supporting Actress, 1948. Other Academy nominations: *Snake Pit* – Best Director, Picture, Screenplay, Actress and Music, 1949; *Pinky* – Best Actress and Supporting Actress, 1950.

cinema. The social problem films were the site of a mutually influential process in place by the late 1940s: Hollywood's prestige dramas began to incorporate more finely internalized modes of aesthetic judgment just as the popular press critics responsible for the legitimization of Hollywood's product took the prestige drama as their main focus. This interplay between internal trends in the film industry and its context as social practice helps to explain Hollywood's makeover between the conspicuous cultural touchstone of *Dodsworth* and the quiet respectability of *Marty* – indeed, between its classical form and what film scholars identify as postclassical style and content.

One significant factor internal to the film industry was responsible for the emergence of the newer type of prestige film. Starting in 1940 but more particularly after 1947, the oligopolistic and vertically integrated arrangement of the industry started to undergo reorganization because of antitrust prosecutions and rulings. This process stretched for two decades, but various stages of its implementation had an immediate impact. Embedded in the industry's metamorphosis was a transformation of the prestige film itself. The stability of the cultural marketplace for movies in the 1920s and 1930s was matched by the stability of oligopoly and vertical integration. After World War II, however, the *Paramount* antitrust case upended studio economic arrangements. When combined with new marketplace conditions and more localized economic trends, divorcement created the ideal conditions for some studios and independent producers to shift modes of prestige film production.

The classical prestige picture had its roots in a stable studio system of content and genre differentiation. As Tino Balio has argued, the prestige picture of the 1930s was not a genre but rather a production category. 'A prestige picture is typically a big-budget special based on a pre-sold property', he writes, 'often as not a "classic", and tailored for top stars.' He lists four cycles that dominated the decade's big-budget productions: nineteenth-century European literature; Shakespearean plays; bestselling novels and hit Broadway plays written by Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning authors; biographical and historical subjects.[5] These were usually two hours or more in their running time and were exhibited on a roadshow basis, similar to the legitimate theatre, with single features, increased prices, intermissions and reserved seating. The exhibition treatment, production values, star draw and overall quality usually made these films the bigger box-office performers of the decade. Just as importantly, Balio notes, they were the defining public face of the studio, both within the industry and among the larger public.

The prestige film of the 1950s shared many characteristics with its 1930s counterpart. If anything, film specials with high-profile premieres and roadshow exhibition were now the mainstay of a greatly reduced and entrenched film industry, not just occasional productions. Biblical epics replicated the spectacle of 1930s historical dramas such as *In Old Chicago* (Henry King, 1938) on a grander scale. The literary and

5 Balio, *Grand Design*, pp. 179–80.

historical melodrama *Raintree County* (Edward Dmytryk, 1957) mimicked *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) in its running time, theme and intermission. Broadway hits by William Inge (*Picnic* [Joshua Logan, 1955]) and Tennessee Williams (*Streetcar Named Desire* [Elia Kazan, 1951]) were adapted for the screen.

Nevertheless, on closer examination the postwar prestige film was different. For one thing, legitimate theatre had itself changed after the war and now veered away from popular taste and towards a literary realism and 'mature' content that suited the highbrow and, more especially, middlebrow tastes of those still attending dramatic theatre. More importantly, the postwar spectacle film was not necessarily the same as a prestige production. Stanley Kramer's problem films, such as *The Defiant Ones* (1958), still served as exemplars of 'serious cinema'. Along with *Marty*, other modestly budgeted, black-and-white dramas such as *On the Waterfront* (Elia Kazan, 1954), *Twelve Angry Men* (Sidney Lumet, 1957) and *Inherit the Wind* (Stanley Kramer, 1960) defined Hollywood at its most literary and intellectual. *From Here to Eternity* (Fred Zinneman, 1953) surpassed in prestige the box-office juggernaut *The Robe* (Henry Koster, 1953). In the postwar years, the prestige film had split between the popular prestige picture, often an epic spectacle, and the critical prestige picture, including the problem film and the literary melodrama. Two modes of prestige, in essence, sat side by side.

Ultimately, the breakup of the studio's vertical monopoly and horizontal oligopoly put into play secondary changes that fostered studios' reliance on the critical prestige picture. Most notably, the *Paramount* decision made the distribution market competitive once more: distributors (the studios) still formed an oligopoly, but now exhibitors could begin to purchase films regardless of studio affiliation, without the restrictions of block or blind booking. Michael Conant points out that the process of divorcement was a decade long. After the Supreme Court ruling in the *United States vs Paramount Studios* case of 1948, it would take until the end of the 1950s before MGM divested its ownership of Loews cinemas, but already in 1951 Paramount's first-run theatres were booking on a strictly competitive basis.[6] Still other effects were felt earlier: block booking was limited to five-feature blocks after the first consent decree in 1940, and the practice ended after the first *Paramount* decree in 1946. In all, divorcement proceeded unevenly, and the lag between the consent decree and final divestment – and the staggering of different studios' divestment – provided fertile ground for the postwar social problem films and new prestige films.

The double-feature system of the 1930s and war years was, to begin with, suddenly subject to instability. For a decade the system had functioned for all three branches of the industry. Brian Taves points to several advantages that the B films held for the studios: they met demand for product, guaranteed cash flow and 'balance[d] a large overhead by using sets, stages, ranches, and contract talent on a nearly continual

6 Michael Conant, *Antitrust in the Motion Picture Industry: Economic and Legal Analysis* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1960), pp. 107–12.

basis'.[7] The fixed rentals of the lower halves of the double bills were a hedge against the riskier yet potentially more profitable A films. One can overstate the functional nature of the double features, since audiences and producers alike frequently chafed at the practice in the 1930s, yet the double feature matched the exhibition market of the Depression years, with its premium on variety and quantity over quality; generally, only first-run downtown theatres could resist the demand for double bills.[8]

The end of block booking mandated by the consent decree did not stop the practice of double features, but it did put more competitive pressure on both the A and B features. The war years were the start of a decade-long shift in budget allotment of the major studios. 'Because of the overheated first-run market, the success of reissues, and decree-related selling policies', Thomas Schatz notes, 'the majors all but eliminated low-budget productions during the war.'[9] Essentially, A-film budgets became less risky and more profitable, so production budgets rose accordingly, fuelled additionally by inflation and rising input costs. The limitations of block booking meant that the majors needed A-film quality more and B-film market hedge less. This situation would become acute in the postwar years, as the ban on block booking would lead to the majors' outright abandonment of their B units. Now that the end of block booking increased demand for higher-quality pictures and decreased demand for the Bs, studios found production costs rising even higher. The postwar market, in fact, was pushing in two directions at once. Studios could not find a market of exhibitors willing to pay what they considered an adequate price for the B product, while parts of the exhibition market, especially the neighbourhood and small-town 'circuit theatres', were still showing double bills and found it difficult to rent affordable films for the lower half of the bill. By 1949, *Variety* reported that double-bill theatres had difficulty finding non-percentage-rental pictures when even B-film stalwarts Columbia and Republic announced the plan to cut B production.[10] By the early 1950s, rising production costs and falling profits would effectively cause the double-feature system to implode.

Paradoxically, the dual feature's demise had a particular impact on the production category by definition never shown in double features: the prestige film. Aided at first by the strong wartime A-film market, prestige films of the traditional mould performed quite well for the studios. Spurred on by demand, their production costs would rise steadily throughout the decade; additionally, inflation and the expense of Technicolor pushed the cost of prestige films higher in the postwar years. Industry-wide, the average feature budget in 1942 was $336,000; that figure rose to $554,386 in 1945 and $665,000 in 1946.[11] The trend was sustainable as attendance was steady or rising, but already in 1947 the exhibition market faced its first domestic decline and loss of overseas markets to protectionism. Suddenly the worries of industry observers were well founded.[12] Without a steady income stream from integrated theatres or block-booked B films, the studios' balance sheets were

7 Taves, 'The B film', p. 313.

8 Robert W. Chambers, 'The double feature as a sales problem', *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 16, no. 4 (1938), pp. 226-36. *Variety* complained of a 'vicious circle' keeping double features entrenched as industry practice. Mike Wear, 'Growth of double bills', *Variety*, 3 January 1937, p. 12.

9 Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: the American Cinema in the 1940. History of the American Cinema*, Volume VI (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), p. 152.

10 'Dualers' dearth of B's in 1950', *Variety*, 16 November 1949, p. 7; 'Certain secondary houses in a spot because of dearth of A's', *Variety*, 29 June 1949, p. 6.

11 Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, p. 172, 331.

12 Ibid., pp. 330–31; 'Top-drawer industry leaders accept staggering production costs but fear no B.O. dip', *Variety*, 8 January 1947, p. 5. Schatz points to the 1947 loss of the British exhibition market as a major factor in studio planning for 1948.

squeezed and the top end of their output was in crisis. 20th Century-Fox, for instance, produced a few extravagantly budgeted prestige films in the late 1940s. At a time when the studio's A films ranged from $1 million to $2.5 million, Fox counted on 1946's *The Razor's Edge* (Edmund Goulding, 1946), costing $3.35 million, 1947's *Forever Amber* (Otto Preminger, 1947), costing $6.38 million, and 1948's *Captain from Castile* (Henry King, 1947), costing $4.5 million. Each meant a loss on the balance sheet, with high rental returns ($8 million worldwide for *Amber*, $6 million for *Captain*) that nonetheless failed to recuperate below-the-line costs. As Aubrey Solomon observes on the expensive prestige film: 'On the average $1.5 million picture, such returns would be wildly successful, but new extravagance would take its toll on profits'.[13] Studios in fact did rein in extravagance, and quickly. Over the next two years, Fox would reduce its typical high-A budget from $2.35 million to $1.785 million, a drop repeated across the industry.[14]

One strategy for cutting costs came from the mid-A and near-A market. The social problem film was one obvious success story. Problem films were not entirely new in the late 1940s, but as a prestige genre their appearance was intermittent, more of a hypothetical promise of what serious Hollywood could be than a trend in its achievement. Nonetheless, films like *Grapes of Wrath* (John Ford, 1940) established the direction in which producer Darryl Zanuck, Fox and the industry in general would go after 1945. Wyler's independent *Best Years of Our Lives* shared some stylistic traits with the director's earlier prestige productions, but pursued prestige through topical reference rather than presold source material and through a stark, realist aesthetic rather than spectacle. The year before, *Lost Weekend* had won Best Picture from the Academy despite production values that were plain, mid-budget and far removed from the *Grapes of Wrath*'s literary tone and pace. Fox's 'race problem' cycle of *Gentleman's Agreement*, *The Snake Pit* and *Pinky* continued the trend with contemporary milieu, decent but modest production values and moderate star draw. In fact, Fox found the mid-budgeted, A-film, social problem picture to be its most profitable type of film. *Gentleman's Agreement* earned $3.9 million domestically, *The Snake Pit* $4.1 million and *Pinky* $4.2 million. Even without world rentals, these returns were essentially double the negative costs. Unable to fund profitably lush production values or lavish sets, Fox opted for prestige based on realism in style or content. Poor box-office performance of the spectacle prestige film signalled to the studio that audiences and critics were just as likely to reward the 'quality' mid-budget drama. Fox's formula was soon copied: Susan Hayward tried to imitate Ray Milland's career success by playing an alcoholic in *Smash-Up* (Stuart Heisler, 1947), normally staid and prestige-focused MGM felt emboldened to adapt *Intruder in the Dust* (Clarence Brown, 1949) and Columbia entered the prestige race with the socially relevant *All the King's Men* (Robert Rossen, 1949).

The postwar problem films were not prestige pictures in the strictest sense of film industry economics: big-budget offerings exhibited on a

13 Aubrey Solomon, *Twentieth Century-Fox: A Corporate and Financial History* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1988), p. 66. All Fox production costs and domestic receipts cited are from ibid., pp. 242-4.

14 Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, p. 332.

roadshow basis. Except for *Best Years of Our Lives*, the initial problem films like *Lost Weekend* or *Gentleman's Agreement* played as normal A films, albeit ones with unexpectedly long runs and strong box office. By other measures, though, they had the marks of the prestige picture: their advertisements served as the public face of their studios, in both the general and the trade press; they received disproportionate recognition from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences; the popular press championed them; and they tapped into a broad cultural admiration, especially from community groups, clergy and members of an urban cultural elite.[15] In the new conditions of a postwar USA, the move to relevant content had guided studios to the new model of the prestige film.

Nowhere was this model clearer than in ambitious Bs that crossed over. RKO's *Crossfire* (Edward Dmytryk, 1947), for instance, was shot at a negative cost of between $500,000 and $650,000 (a near-A budget in 1947), and grossed four times its cost by becoming a hit in major metropolitan areas, where its run broke local theatre records.[16] The film's box-office success prompted *Variety* to write of studios pursuing an aggressive B policy:

> Announcements of the 'high end of Bs' have been customarily greeted with a yawn in the trade, but present efforts appear to have a bit more substance than the usual exercise at label-juggling. Such important grossers as 20th-Fox's 'Boomerang' and RKO's 'Crossfire' made it perfectly apparent last year that a B-size budget didn't have to mean a B-sized picture.
>
> ...
>
> Warner Brothers' plan is to make the lower-budgeters as exercises for their embryo talent, but Metro and RKO both aim to use generously the upper-bracket personnel among producers, writers, directors and players. Dore Schary, RKO production chief, who was responsible for the $650,000 'Crossfire,' is particularly hot on the idea of making pix at from $400,000 to $600,00 that, by the unusual nature of their story, will compensate for other values that must be shaved to stay within this ceiling.
>
> ...
>
> The type of story is particularly important in the change. The former concept was that minimum cost films must generally be adventure and action yarns. Compare that with Schary's 'Boy with the Green Hair', now in preparation, which is aimed at fighting prejudice, bearing similarity to this extent to 'Crossfire'.
>
> Rather than being produced down to audiences who might be expected to see a B in a subsequent-run house, Schary's using the low-budget unit to experiment with mature stories and yarns with social content that can attract the type of audience which just doesn't 'go to the movies' but picks its pictures.[17]

The strategy of upgrading B-budgeted films into A films through problem-film material was repeated at RKO, before Schary was ousted,[18]

15 The correspondence held in the Stanley Kramer Collection is a good sample of the admiration, organized and spontaneous, that these members of the cultural elite afforded Kramer for his problem films. Stanley Kramer collection, Charles E. Young Library Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles.

16 Betty Lasky, *RKO: The Biggest Little Major of Them All* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984), pp. 196–7.

17 'When's a B film not a B', *Variety*, 4 February 1948, p. 7.

18 'Hughes wants no "messages" in pix; viz. *Green Hair*', *Variety*, 4 August 1948, p. 1.

and across the industry. In turn, even A-film, problem-film producer Fox adopted the upgrading strategy for its low-A *No Way Out* (Joseph Mankiewicz, 1950), which would, as Zanuck's comments on the script indicated:

> strive for realism and not extravagance. I visualize this picture in the same category as *Boomerang*, *Street With No Name* [*13 Rue Madeleine*], and *Call Northside 777*, and while it is in the same milieu as *Gentleman's Agreement* and *The Snake Pit*, it does not, of course, demand such an expensive overall production.[19]

Zanuck's comparison points to the distinction the studio made between the problem film and the pseudodocumentary – the A and B genres of postwar realism – and its use of realism as marker of aesthetic distinction. The trend would continue until the final divorcement of Loews Theatres – throughout the 1950s, Schary slated a number of low-budget productions as social problem films, including *Go For Broke!* (Robert Pirosh, 1951) and *Bad Day at Black Rock* (John Sturges, 1955).

These major studio examples do not include the many independent productions that shared the major studios' gambits for prestige. Independent production had been around for some time, usually appended to United Artists' distribution arm. However, the war years encouraged independent production. The emphasis on quality A films and the first-run market boom led studios to adopt greater use of unit production and of independent production, while tax laws encouraged talented individuals to form their own production companies.[20] 'Independent' companies proliferated at varying degrees of distance from the studios. One key arrangement was the in-house independent, whose freedom brought creative licence to use lower-budgeted pictures as a sort of research and development arm for the studio. Meanwhile, by the postwar years, competitive distribution gave truly independent producers entry into the exhibition market.

Whatever their distance from the major and minor studios, independents were able to use social relevance or pseudodocumentary realism to parlay a low-budget film into mid-budget prestige and box-office returns. Mark Hellinger, in-house at Universal, turned to pseudodocumentary for *The Naked City* (Jules Dassin, 1948), while Schary's Vanguard Pictures provided the social comedy *The Farmer's Daughter* (H.C. Potter, 1947) for Selznick and RKO. The cycle of what Thom Anderson calls *films gris*, noir films with a realist milieu and left-leaning message or allegory, displays the range of the new independent relationships: *The Lawless* (Joseph Losey, 1950, Pine-Thomas in house at Paramount), *Body and Soul* (Robert Rossen, 1947, Enterprise Productions through United Artists), *Give Us This Day/Christ In Concrete* (Edward Dmytryk, 1949, 'independent' for poverty-row Eagle-Lion) and *Right Cross* (John Sturges, 1950, B film at MGM).[21] Equally important were the higher-key social problem dramas emerging with the late-1940s' 'race problem' cycle. Louis de Rochemont's *Lost*

19 Darryl Zanuck, memo, 1 February 1949, Box 2420.2, 20th Century Fox script archive, Special Collections for Cinema and Television, Doheny Library, University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

20 Schatz, 'Boom and bust', pp. 178–88.

21 Thom Anderson, 'Red Hollywood', in Suzanne Ferguson and Barbara Groseclose (eds), *Literature and the Visual Arts in Contemporary Society* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1985), pp. 141–96. See also Charles J. Maland, 'Film gris: crime, critique and Cold War culture in 1951', *Film Criticism*, vol. 23, pp. 1–26.

Boundaries (Alfred Werker, 1949) managed to combine problem film and pseudodocumentary, and the film's distribution company, Film Classics, was duly rewarded. The company, in fact, had staked its distribution fee on the film's success; the box-office success and increased prestige of *Lost Boundaries* allowed Film Classics, a small independent distributor specializing in rereleases, to seek better independent productions to increase the money it fronted for independent production projects.[22] Kramer got a boost from *Home of the Brave*, which like *Lost Boundaries* was produced for under $600,000. The number of social problem independents continued and multiplied in the 1950s: the Kramer films, *I Want to Live!* (Robert Wise, 1958), *Blackboard Jungle* (Richard Brooks, 1955) and the Samuel Fuller films dealing with racial prejudice are prominent examples. The example of Walter Wanger's production of *I Want to Live!* shows how, well into the late 1950s, independents continued to upgrade low-budget films to A films for the first-run market by adopting social problem content.[23] Afterwards, the new mode of prestige film would no longer be concentrated in the moribund social problem genre but in New American Cinema and other prestige dramas.

Divorcement alone did not bring about change in the class disposition of prestige cinema. Rather, metaphorically speaking, the industrial changes were a fulcrum or lever that translated broader cultural shifts into the particular decisions about what Hollywood studios produced. That is, filmmakers and producers made the decisions they did partly for idiosyncratic reasons, but always in the context of what audiences responded to and what public discourse circulated about their studios' films. Divorcement helps to explain Hollywood's timing in turning towards the socially serious as well as the underlying causes of its new relation to middlebrow taste formations. The prestige film of the 1930s relied on a relatively stagnant hierarchy between cinema and art. The destabilization of that hierarchy had every bit as much to do with the destabilization of the industry as it did with what filmgoers wanted and expected to see.

By its nature, prestige is a social phenomenon. It requires, in C. Wright Mills's pithy summary, 'at least two persons: one to claim it, and another to honor the claim'.[24] It is one thing for the industry to claim an aesthetically superior and socially edifying product, it is another for viewers and observers to agree with that claim. Understanding the prestige film means not merely tracking its industrial history, but more broadly assessing the place of cinema in what Pierre Bourdieu terms a hierarchy of legitimate culture: 'Not all cultural meanings, theatrical presentations, sporting events, recitals of songs, poetry or chamber-music, operettas or operas, are equivalent in dignity and value, and they do not all call for the same approach with the same urgency', he writes, adding:

> In other words, the various systems of expression, from theatre to television, are objectively organized according to a hierarchy

22 'FC's fee gamble on *Boundaries* pays off solidly', *Variety*, 23 November 1949, p. 3; '*Boundaries, Wanted* cause film classics to revise budget ideas', *Variety*, 27 July 1949, p. 9.

23 Dennis Bingham, '"I do want to live!": female voices, male discourse and Hollywood biopics', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 38, no. 3 (1999), p. 8.

24 C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: the American Middle Classes* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 239.

> independent of individual opinions, which defines cultural legitimacy and its gradations. Faced with meanings situated outside the sphere of legitimate culture, consumers feel they have the right to remain pure consumers, and judge freely; on the other hand, within the field of consecrated culture, they feel measured according to objective norms, and forced to adopt a dedicated, ceremonial and ritualized attitude. Thus jazz, cinema and photography do not give rise – because they do not claim it with the same urgency – to the attitude of dedication, which is common coin when one is dealing with works of scholarly culture. Some virtuosos, in a bid for legitimation, transfer to these arts models of behaviour that are current in the realm of traditional culture. But in the absence of an institution to teach them methodically and systematically as constituent parts of legitimate culture, most people experience them in quite a different way, as simple consumers.[25]

25 Pierre Bourdieu, with Luc Boltanski et al., *Photography: a Middle-brow Art* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 95–6.

For Bourdieu, the 'middle arts' like jazz, cinema and photography fall into a 'sphere of the legitimizable' in which formalized aesthetic attitudes begin to take hold, but only variably across the population and without the institutional legitimacy of the high arts. The history of the prestige film, therefore, is partly a history of the relative importance of 'pure consumers' and 'virtuosos' in the reception of 'quality' films. Over the twentieth century, and during the postwar years especially, the cinema underwent an elevation in cultural status from Bourdieu's sphere of the arbitrary (that of pure consumer) to the sphere of the legitimizable. First, highbrow artists and intellectuals began to view cinema as an art form in its own right, and their cineclubs, criticism and institutions formed an incipient film culture challenging Hollywood. Subsequently, middlebrow appreciation came to mean not simply Hollywood's citation of high culture but also the filmgoer's distinction between serious, artistic feature cinema and Hollywood's usual product. The altered relation of cinema to the other arts brought about a shift in a genre, the prestige film, built on a fixed relationship between film and the legitimate arts.

Perhaps the most significant development for the emerging film culture was the development of high-minded film criticism in response to avant-garde filmmaking. David Bordwell has argued that 'seventh art' cinephilia emerged from this network of film periodicals, cineclubs and institutions and that it marked a considerable redefinition of highbrow taste:

> The faults of this research program should not lead us to forget how radical it was. For many years after the invention, most well-educated people thought that film could acquire prestige only by aping great works of drama or literature. ... Nevertheless, the Standard Version fell prey to elite assumptions by expecting film to develop in accord with high-art models.[26]

26 David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 44.

The shift in highbrow sensibility can be measured in difference between *The Nation*'s 1913 lampoon of a 'Democratic Art' – 'To watch one of

these exhibitions is like seeing an animated popular magazine without the labor of turning the pages, and like the picture magazine it requires no thought or attention' [27] – and a 1929 *New York Herald Tribune* review of *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (Carl Theodor-Dreyer, 1928) as 'among the really significant achievements of modern art'.[28] Seventh-art film criticism in upscale, 'serious' publications like *The New Republic* and *The Nation* and leftist political publications like *The New Masses* championed the avant garde and disdained most commercial cinema, but nonetheless took seriously the idea that the cinema, including popular cinema, *could* be art.

Increasingly, highbrow film culture also gained an institutional footing. The Museum of Modern Art was instrumental in applying art-historical discourse to a popular medium hitherto without history or preservation. The library spoke of periods, of movements and schools of filmmaking, and of aesthetic breakthroughs. It exhibited and distributed programmes of films to educational and cultural institutions: 'The Development of Narrative', 'The Rise of the American Film', and so on.[29] Meanwhile, the nonfiction film was following another avenue towards cultural legitimacy; whereas MoMA's Film Library had been a milestone in the acceptance of film within the artistic and literary fields, government and foundation sponsorship of the documentary movement of the 1930s marked some level of acceptance in the fields of social science and public policy.

Taken together, these developments – the emergence of an aesthetically oriented film criticism and the institutionalization of art-historical and social-scientific discourses of cinema – outline a shift in the intellectual field of the interwar years. Previously, highbrow taste factions had dismissed film as frivolous entertainment at best, culturally undignified at worst, while legitimate social-scientific and policy voices saw movies as having an unhealthy influence on society. But whether in response to the importation of foreign avant-garde films, the transition from silent to sound in Hollywood or the emergence of nonfiction films, certain intellectuals pushed cinema into the sphere of the legitimizable. The effect was to split highbrow response to cinema into two factions: a traditionalist disdain for popular culture and a reclamation of the aesthetic (or sociologically serious) within popular art. Bourdieu has described attempts to *épater la bourgeoisie* as 'proving the extent of one's power to confer aesthetic status';[30] in many ways the division in US highbrow taste over cinema sprang from a similar gambit by a dominated faction of the bourgeoisie.

The highbrow impulse would flourish in the non-commercial film culture and vibrant avant garde of the postwar years. In 1947, the largest and most influential of the postwar film societies, Cinema 16, began its successful two-decade run in New York, taking an even more scholastic approach to film exhibition than MoMA and expanding its focus to include documentary and non-narrative films with no chance for commercial exhibition. The US avant garde, too, was blossoming on both

27 'A democratic art', *The Nation*, 28 August 1913, p. 193. I am indebted for this pointer to Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: the Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 231.

28 Richard Watts, Jr, 'A dying art offers a masterpiece', *New York Herald Tribune*, 31 March 1929.

29 Haidee Wasson, *Museum Movies: the Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005); Raymond J. Haberski, Jr, *It's Only a Movie!: Films and Critics in American Culture* (Lexington, KT: University of Kentucky Press, 2001).

30 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 47.

coasts. Even if many of the avant-garde films of the 1940s and 1950s were quasi-narrative in comparison to the structural-materialist films that would come in the 1960s and 1970s, they nonetheless confounded or subverted narrative expectations inherited from the commercial film industry and as such were experienced as assaults on conventional notions of what films should be. The obtuse 'narratives' of Gregory Markopoulos, Willard Maas or Maya Deren defied easy comprehension and forced viewers to use other arts – poetry, mythology, dance – as an aesthetic key to their understanding. As Lauren Rabinowitz argues:

> cinema was increasingly identified as an object divided on the basis of the intellectual discourse associated with different groups of media objects. By the end of the decade, 'highbrow', 'lowbrow', and 'middlebrow' had become the popular designations of hierarchical categories of aesthetic taste.[31]

31 Lauren Rabinowitz, 'The American avant-garde', in Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, p. 459.

As before the war, highbrow reception developed in tandem with avant-garde filmmaking, but the postwar counterparts pitted their film culture against not only a culturally reviled Hollywood but also an emerging middlebrow culture.

That middlebrow film culture borrowed from the highbrow cineastes the notion that cinema was an art, and combined it with an almost exclusive preference for commercial fiction features. In one sense, it continued a middlebrow impulse of Hollywood itself. Joan Shelley Rubin diagnoses a split tendency in middlebrow culture – on the one hand democratic and on the other hand reverential to cultural authority – across early twentieth-century US culture, from the 'great books' movement to book-of-the-month clubs and Alexander Woolcott's book-review radio broadcasts.[32] Similarly, the literary adaptations, biopics and historical films of the 1930s promised for the masses the possibility of high-culture experience. To studios they were valuable not simply for preselling content, but also for the association of cultural elevation they conferred – the sense that watching a film version of a canonical novel or play was a substitute for the aesthetic experience of the adapted work itself. *Dodsworth* is an ideal type in this use of literary source material; the film was based primarily on the work of a novelist with high-culture credentials and secondarily on an acclaimed Broadway theatrical adaptation. Thematically, the film centres on 'adult' material, the dissolution of a marriage because of a wife's infidelity; if anything, the film version emphasizes the bittersweet romance more than the source material does. Characteristically, the novel's keen class analysis in the myriad cultural references that European travel provides for its protagonist Sam Dodsworth are conspicuously missing in the adaptation; prestige filmmakers were primarily interested in literary source material for romantic melodramas with a more complicated emotional tenor.

32 Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), p. 295.

The postwar years continued this outwardly middlebrow citation of highbrow culture. Marianne Conroy has pointed to references rife in postwar Hollywood's narratives, from theatrical adaptations marketed as

vehicles for method actors to the social problem films. In *Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, 1959), she notes:

> The possibility that Lora might audition for a [Tennessee] Williams play is no sooner proffered than it is dropped. The play is 'all cast' before she even appears in Loomis's office. ... In fact, the specific playis largely beside the point of the reference; indeed, Williams himself matters only insofar as he is arguably the one American playwright a mass audience in 1959 would have recognized as a serious writer of 'blockbuster plays'.[33]

The postwar middlebrow film still tried to be a substitute for high culture but also thematized legitimate culture as distinct from the Hollywood formula. Frank Sinatra unpacking his stack of Modern Library books in *Some Came Running* (Vincente Minelli, 1959) or the montage of 'classic' book covers in *I Remember Mama* (George Stevens, 1948) take on, conspicuously, a high-culture/cinema differentiation that the 1930s prestige film was all too eager to elide.

Postwar middlebrow film culture involved far more than explicit citation, however. Art films from Britain's Rank Studios or social problem films from Stanley Kramer and 20th Century-Fox did not so much offer anxious cultural references within their narratives as they positioned themselves as the sort of cinema middlebrow consumers championed as 'artistic'. The distinction between 'Hollywood' and 'art' assumed a centrality in the classed reception of the postwar years. Aesthetic judgment came without any semi-formalized basis of formal contemplation that marked highbrow discussions; in making claims of artistry for social problem and other prestige pictures, these consumers were pursuing a parallel process of legitimization that the highbrows had effected in another context. Hollow citations and literary uplift continued, but increasingly, too, middlebrow taste valued in cinema a literary and theatrical 'quality' and recognizable characteristics of 'maturity': socially relevant content (the 'race problem' cycle), theatrical scope in acting style (*Henry V* [Laurence Olivier, 1945]), pessimistic subject matter (*The Men* [Fred Zinneman, 1950] and *The Snake Pit*) epic narrative scale applied to everyday subject matter (*Best Years of Our Lives*) and eventually non-traditional sexual thematics (*Bonjour Tristesse* [Otto Preminger, 1958]). This version of the middlebrow had less to do with the class references that could corroborate the audience member's self-image than in positing one's preference for the 'right' kind of film artistry as a conspicuous marker of one's social position. For quite a few people, cinema had become a realm of potential cultural legitimacy.

The rise and subsequent changes in middlebrow culture corresponded to the changing class structure of a rapidly expanding economy. Janice Radway traces the rise of the middlebrow in the first half of the twentieth century to the rise of the professional–managerial class; Conroy similarly cites C. Wright Mills's notion of status panic and white-collar growth.[34] Both explanations are useful, but insufficient: the

33 Marianne Conroy, '"No sin in lookin' prosperous": gender, race, and the class formations of middlebrow taste in *Imitation of Life*', in Rick Berg and David James (eds), *The Hidden Formation: Cinema and the Question of Class* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 119.

34 Janice Radway, *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste and Middle-class Desire* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Conroy, '"No sin in lookin' prosperous"'; Mills, *White Collar*.

'new middle classes' appeared a half-century before the period Conroy considers, and the mere existence of a professional–managerial class does not account for any change in middlebrow culture between the 1920s and the 1950s. Here, Bourdieu's sociology of taste can help. While older strains of middlebrow culture arose from the class milieu of the old petite bourgeoisie (shop owners and small-scale proprietors), three new bourgeois class fractions favoured newer strains of middlebrow culture, ones more inclined towards the 'virtuoso' gambits of cultural legitimization. The ascendant or 'new bourgeoisie' represents the new business and management class created by the managerial revolution.[35] The new petite bourgeoisie includes 'all the occupations involving presentation and representation (sales, marketing, advertising, public relations, fashion, decoration, and so forth) and in all the institutions providing symbolic goods and services'.[36] The class fraction is marked by the 'well-armed pretension',[37] a pretension to high culture based on a rejection of tastes typically associated with the petite bourgeoisie. Finally, the 'executant' petite bourgeoisie includes junior executives and clerical workers, who fall between the newer and more classically middlebrow forms.[38] One likely engine for the change in middlebrow reception and the cultural legitimization of cinema is a changing balance between these 'newer middle classes'. While the managerial revolution of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries began to undermine the old petite bourgeoisie, the sustained economic prosperity of the 1940s swelled the ranks of the new and executant petite bourgeoisie while solidifying the stature and social hegemony of the new bourgeoisie. Class coalition is a useful notion in describing the social problem genre, which included the top box-office earners for their studios and straddled 'mass' and 'class' appeal.

35 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 311.

36 Ibid., p. 359.

37 Ibid., p. 362.

38 Ibid., p. 351.

The journalistic film critic was both an emblem and a key catalyst of middlebrow reception. Already employed to make judgments on commercial narrative cinema, film reviewers extended their charge to an aesthetic judgment that referenced cinema's existence as art. Scholars such as Robert Ray have pointed to a gap between popular and critical tastes in the 1950s but have underestimated how much this dynamic was already emerging by the mid 1940s.[39] For instance, Bosley Crowther's favourite films of 1946 were not the year's box-office winners (see Table, overleaf). A few, like *Best Years of Our Lives* and *Notorious* (Alfred Hitchock, 1946), appear on both lists, but it is instructive to note that films with a strong box-office draw – *Road to Utopia* (Hal Walker, 1945) or *Saratoga Trunk* (Sam Wood, 1943/45) – were even more generic and less like the kind of prestige film that Crowther preferred. In contrast to highbrow writers such as Parker Tyler and Manny Farber, mainstream critics did not see potential cultural worth in any film, high or low, but instead took the prestige drama, the art film and the social problem film as the *raison d'être* for their criticism. A mutually influential process was thus in place by the late 1940s: Hollywood's prestige dramas had begun

39 Robert B. Ray, *A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema, 1930–1980* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 141.

to incorporate more finely internalized modes of aesthetic judgment just as the popular press critics responsible for legitimizing Hollywood's product took the prestige drama as their main focus. Against a backdrop of the film industry's changing conception of prestige drama, postwar journalistic critics assessed cinema's relation to other media and urged the production of films that could compete with higher arts.

Critical favourites and box-office winners, 1946[40]

New York Times' Ten Best (1946)	Top Grossing Films (1946)
Open City	The Best Years of Our Lives
Road to Utopia	Duel in the Sun
The Green Years	The Jolson Story
Henry V	The Yearling
Notorious	Saratoga Trunk
Brief Encounter	The Razor's Edge
The Well-Digger's Daughter	Night and Day
The Best Years of Our Lives	Notorious
My Darling Clementine	Til the Clouds Roll By
Stairway to Heaven	Road to Utopia
	Two Years Before the Mast
	The Green Years
	The Harvey Girls
	Margie
	Easy To Wed

40 Source: Bosley Crowther, 'The "ten best"', *The New York Times*, sec. II, 29 December 1946; '60 top grossers of 1946', *Variety*, 8 January 1947, p. 8; Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, p. 467.

Nowhere, at least in the latter part of the 1940s, was the film critic's self-consciousness in discussing film as an artistic medium more noticeable than in reviews of problem films. The popular press's middlebrow tendency continually contrasted the prestige film with Hollywood's non-prestige product. Bourdieu, famously, has pinned this sort of differentiation as the basis of class judgment: 'A difference ... only becomes a visible ... socially pertinent difference if it is perceived by someone who is capable of making the distinction [who] is endowed with the categories of perception'.[41] Critical distinction was not new to the postwar years (*The Nation* in 1913 had classificatory schemata of its own), but postwar journalistic critics approached the social-problem film through a series of distinctions that signalled the cinema's position in the sphere of the legitimizable: European or Hollywood, mature or immature, art or commerce, courage or cravenness, realism or artifice. Bourdieu's model not only draws attention to these binary contrasts, but also reminds us that binary distinction need not serve a binary understanding of class. Even close historical studies like Lea Jacobs's reading of A–B film distinction in the 1930s often take the historical agents' class antinomies to imply class bifurcation.[42] Instead, aesthetic distinction just as often asserts a middlebrow taste. While highbrow taste differentiated Hollywood and the avant garde, Hollywood and documentary or Hollywood and the European art film, the middlebrow critics contrasted different commercial narrative features to suggest that

41 Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: on the Theory of Action* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 9.

42 Lea Jacobs, 'The B film and problem of cultural distinction', *Screen*, vol. 33, no.1 (1992), pp. 1–13.

some were closer than others to more legitimate theatrical, literary or visual arts.

The distinction between imported and domestic product was the most glaring. Films imported from Europe were instrumental in shifting the middle terrain in cinematic legitimization. Highbrow critics championed the Italian neorealist films and in so doing helped to solder cultural legitimacy with a self-consciously realist aesthetic. In Hollywood, neorealism inspired specific productions like *The Search* (Fred Zinneman, 1948) and, arguably, a general narrative activation of location shooting. As Barbara Wilinsky has emphasized, the cosmopolitan values associated with watching foreign films were central to the discourses of reception during the emergence of the 'art film' in the postwar years.[43] The films of Britain's Rank Studios – *Henry V*, *The Red Shoes* (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressberger, 1948) and *Brief Encounter* (David Lean, 1945) – implicitly challenged Hollywood's product by citing some higher art, such as theatre, dance or the psychological novel.

Whether Italian or British, foreign films contrasted with Hollywood and guided middlebrow reception of the social problem film. One reviewer of *Crossfire* (Edward Dmytryk, 1947), for example, called the film 'an example of what Hollywood can do ... if it wants, or if it has the courage more than once in a blue moon. This RKO-Radio production is the sort of film that critics and a critical public have come to expect only from abroad'[44]. A review of *The Snake Pit* contrasted European films ('purposeful, adventurous, courageous or merely grown up') with a Hollywood that 'lacks the brains, artistry or daring to undertake such work locally'.[45] Even a negative review of *Boy with the Green Hair* (Joseph Losey, 1949) criticized the film on the grounds that it was not enough like the neorealist films.[46] The industry reacted defensively: Warner Brothers' Jerry Wald countered, 'Hollywood may be stumbling, but it's certainly more realistic than Broadway or the British'.[47] Wald's statement reveals just how much had changed in the cultural terrain, so that one might expect Hollywood films to ape legitimate theatre and foreign films more closely.

Meanwhile, critics contrasted maturity and immaturity as stand-ins for cinema's relation to other media. Sometimes 'mature' applied to the implied audience of the film, since reviewers lamented a commercial cinema geared towards teenagers' tastes and sensibilities. One critic praised *All the King's Men* as 'pleasantly free of the superfluous preachments that so often mar a Hollywood movie concerned with any topic more difficult than the mating customs of soda-fountain habitués'.[48] Elsewhere maturity meant the sophistication of the medium relative to other, more institutionalized arts. One reviewer of the films on anti-semitism writes:

> As great mass media, intimidated by the size of their audiences, [the cinema and radio] have lacked the courage familiar in fiction and on

43 Barbara Wilinksy, *Sure Seaters: The Emergence of Art House Cinema* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 38.

44 Review of *Crossfire, Newsweek*, 28 July 1947, p. 84.

45 Robert Hatch, Review of *The Snake Pit, The New Republic*, 8 November 1948, p. 28 and 29.

46 Review of *Boy with the Green Hair, Time*, 10 January 1949, p. 84.

47 Jerry Wald, '1946 in review', *Variety*, 8 January 1947, p. 5.

48 John McCarten, Review of *All The King's Men, The New Yorker*, 12 November 1949, p. 101.

> the stage. ... But of recent months the movies have apparently decided to grow up.[49]

Similarly, a review of *The Snake Pit* calls for an 'adult medium' on an equal footing with literature and capable of dealing 'truthfully and unflinchingly with adult subjects'.[50] *The New York Times* viewed the same film as an opposition to 'Hollywood as usual':

> This latter fact, incidentally, is the only 'Hollywood' touch that Millen Brand and Frank Partos have permitted to show in their superior script. ... *The Snake Pit*, while frankly quite disturbing, and not recommended for the weak, is a mature, emotional drama on a rare and pregnant theme.[51]

In later contexts, 'mature' and 'adult' would connote material that pushed audience expectation of what was sexually permissible on screen. Here, though, 'adult' subjects are the high-minded ones – the superego to Hollywood's usual id.

Underlying the contrast between an adult and a juvenile medium was a parallel contrast between art and commerce, in which the middlebrow tendency castigated escapist cinema in favour of seriousness. In *Pinky*, *Time* was relieved to see the public 'interested in movies that give serious treatment to a serious theme', and in *Best Years of Out Lives*, it was considered as the problem genre's forthrightness a sign of its quality.[52] *Newsweek* praised the 'intelligent and courageous handling' in *Best Years* and the 'restrained and courageous treatment of a delicate theme' in *Lost Boundaries*; the magazine also wrote of Kramer's *Home of the Brave* that 'indisputably, it took courage for an independent producer to tackle this highly controversial theme'.[53] The genre-wide equation of social relevance with courage and honesty was ultimately a restatement of a distinction between art and commerce. Studio films with 'courage', after all, were putting their profits at risk and were hence received as serious rather than commercial in nature.

Finally, the popular press critics contrasted the realism of the social problem film with the artifice of Hollywood's usual product. Many of these reviews cited aspects of the filmmaking itself, including set design and cinematography, as lending an air of realism. 'In spite of the fact that this cast has several top-ranking stars', wrote one review of *Best Years of Our Lives*, 'Wyler has succeeded in making these people as real as your neighbors. This natural tone is further heightened by the realistic sets.'[54] Similarly, *Lost Weekend* received praise for its location shooting and its set design:

> Paramount should be credited for making one of the best movies of this or any other year. ... Not the least of the film's assets are its realistic sets. The Birnam apartment actually looks like a New York apartment; and the street scenes, which were photographed in New York, are the real thing.[55]

49 Review of *Crossfire* and *Gentleman's Agreement*, *Saturday Review of Literature*, 6 December 1947, pp. 69–70.

50 Review of *The Snake Pit*, *Saturday Review of Literature*, 27 November 1948, pp. 28–30.

51 Bosley Crowther, Review of *The Snake Pit*, *The New York Times*, 5 November 1948.

52 Review of *Pinky*, *Time*, 9 October 1945, p. 96; review of *Best Years of Our Lives*, *Time*, 25 November 1946, p. 103.

53 Review of *Best Years of Our Lives*, *Newsweek*, 25 November 1946, p. 104; review of *Lost Boundaries*, *Newsweek*, 4 July 1949, p. 72; review of *Home of the Brave*, *Newsweek*, 16 May 1949, p. 86.

54 Review of *Best Years of Our Lives*, *Commonweal*, 13 December 1946, p. 230.

55 Review of *Lost Weekend*, *Newsweek*, 10 December 1945, p. 112.

The Lawless (Joseph Losey, 1950) impressed a *Time* reviewer in part through its cinematography:

> Using unvarnished photography on the streets, interiors and people of real California towns, director Joseph Losey has given the picture a startling look of reality. For the setting of his manhunt climax, he takes imaginative advantage of the stony, rolling waste of a gold-dredging field. His mob scenes crackle with a spontaneous movement and raw vitality usually found only in bang-up newsreel footage.[56]

Bosley Crowther at *The New York Times* cited *The Lost Weekend*'s 'case-history documentation in its narrative and photographic style', and 'a sharp tone of actuality in all [Wilder's] studio work'.[57]

Not all critics praised the social problem films. Some felt that individual films failed to live up to a quality genre; others objected to the genre's didactic tone, whether from a highbrow disdain of middlebrow 'uplift' or lowbrow defence of mass entertainment. In general, the periodicals more aligned with highbrow taste were the most critical of the problem film. This category included reviewers such as John McCarten from *The New Yorker* or Robert Hatch in *The New Republic*, both quoted above, who took the mission of social relevance to heart yet often faulted problem films for their aesthetic failings, insufficient realism or lack of sociological analysis. James Agee's review of *Crossfire* demonstrates just this strategy:

> Few things pay off better in prestige and hard cash ... than safe fearlessness. This film is not entirely fearless, even within its own terms. ... [I]t may as well be remembered that, at best, Hollywood's heroism is calculated to land buttered side up. Movies about Anti-Semitism aren't so desperately chancy after all. ... All that aside, however, *Crossfire* is an unusually good and honest movie and may – I hope, will – prove a very useful one.[58]

The New York Times's Crowther was another supporter and critic. In his tenure from 1940 to 1967, his support for the genre and the new 'realistic' prestige films were tempered by criticisms of films that he felt did not do justice to social reality.[59] As Frank Eugene Beaver points out, Crowther argued that cinema uplift had a dual nature, aesthetic and social: 'Crowther's demand for realism in pictures', he notes, 'became synonymous with his demand for entertaining and significant stories'.[60] As such, Crowther occupied the middle-ground between the highbrow sensibility of Agee and *The New Yorker* and the middlebrow cultural reverence shown by the anonymous reviewers at *Time* or *Newsweek*. Significantly, the wider-circulating visual-digest magazines such as *Life* and *Look* registered very little generic difference between the problem film and others. In passing along the publicity materials given by the studios, they sidestepped the issue of the films' prestige in favour of the sort of star coverage the middlebrows frowned upon.[61]

56 Review of *The Lawless*, *Time*, 3 July 1950, p. 76.

57 Bosley Crowther, Review of *The Lost Weekend*, *The New York Times*, 3 December 1945.

58 James Agee, Review of *Crossfire*, *The Nation*, 2 August 1947, p. 129.

59 Bosley Crowther, Review of *Gentleman's Agreement*, *The New York Times*, 12 November 1947; review of *Pinky*, *The New York Times*, 30 September 1949.

60 Frank Eugene Beaver, *Bosley Crowther: Social Critic of the Film, 1940–1967* (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1974), p. 36.

61 See, for example, review of *Gentleman's Agreement*, *Life*, 1 December 1947, p. 82.

To a surprising extent, producers and makers of the problem films shared many of the critics' distinctions. Writer Phillip Dunne considered *Pinky*'s script 'the most challenging and important subject for a picture that I have come across in years. ... [I]t can be an even more significant picture than *Gentleman's Agreement*'.[62] Zanuck warned the makers of *No Way Out* against 'any element which even remotely has a feeling of "movie" or "Hollywood". I do not say this disparagingly of the movies or Hollywood, but only as the term is applied by the critics'.[63] He explicitly considered Academy Awards and critical reception in his deliberations on mid- and low-budget prestige films; as he noted on *The Snake Pit*: 'It is neither courageous nor clever for us to try to present in this picture the intimate details of life in an insane asylum. We won't get either critical acclaim nor public praise for it if we do'.[64] Hence, producers did not simply share the critics' perspective (Zanuck was too keen to foster 'showmanship', that is, popular generic appeal), but instead sought the critics' approval, shifting their perspective to vicariously understand the critical mindset.

To gain critical and wider prestige, the studios appealed to the middlebrow taste formation in the marketing of the social problem dramas. To begin with, the emphasis on 'courage' in the receptive context got taken up in the studios' advertising strategy. '*Gentleman's Agreement* calls a spade a spade', read the tagline in one newspaper advertisement. The Northern trailer for *Intruder in the Dust* shows a racist attack from the narrative with a superimposed title reading 'No beating around the bush! No sidestepping! No double-talk!'[65] Implicit was a condemnation of those other kinds of films that did sidestep Jim Crow. Eventually, too, 'courage' became a recurring element in the self-congratulatory industrial discourse on the social problem film.

The rhetoric may have been inflated, but studios such as 20th Century-Fox really sought recognition from a broader slice of established opinion brokers than were traditionally engaged in discussion of cinema. This desire for recognition influenced their marketing strategy, and *Gentleman's Agreement* provides a useful example of the reorientation of prestige film exploitation to cultural elite institutions that held disproportionate sway in the public sphere. Fox advertising executive Charles Schlaifer wrote up the film's exploitation campaign as a report to model the promotion of other mid-A budget prestige films, especially those in the problem film cycle. The new type of prestige film brought with it new means of marketing and promotion to signal its event status, including special screenings for community groups and tie-ins with social scientific research on public opinion.[66] Accordingly, Schlaifer and Zanuck devised a series of advance screenings for opinion-makers, industry competitors and political leaders that would take the place of a traditional premiere.[67] 'The primary purpose of these screenings is to influence New York newspaper reviewers', Schlaifer wrote, but added, 'The secondary purpose of these screenings is to influence nationally syndicated opinion-makers who write either columns, features, or

62 Phillip Dunne, memo to Darryl Zanuck, 19 April 1948, Phillip Dunne Collection, Doheny Library, University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

63 Darryl Zanuck, memo, 1 February 1949, Box 2420.2, 20th Century Fox script archive.

64 Darryl Zanuck, story conference memo, 2 December 1946, Box 2364.2, 20th Century Fox script archive. Elsewhere, Zanuck ponders *Night and the City*'s Academy Award chances in his discussion of *No Way Out*'s approach. Memo on final script, 7 June 1949, Box 2420.9, 20th Century Fox script archive.

65 Trailer script, Box 5300, MGM script archive, Special Collections for Cinema and Television, Doheny Library, University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

66 *Gentleman's Agreement* exploitation report, Charles Schlaifer Collection, Margaret Herrick Library, Beverly Hills, California; 'Audience research on *Crossfire* a cue to pix biz on similar films', *Variety*, 10 December 1947, p. 3; 'Inside stuff', *Variety*, 30 November 1949, p. 18.

67 Report on *Gentleman's Agreement* campaign, 10 November 1947, Charles Schlaifer collection. See also a letter from Darryl Zanuck to Laura Hobson dated 15 November 1947 in the same collection.

editorials.'[68] The success of marketing *Gentleman's Agreement* bore out their ideas. Fox began to prioritize its problem films in the advertising budget. While *Gentleman's Agreement* had cost a respectable $265,000 in publicity – below the big-budget prestige pictures *Forever Amber* and *Captain from Castile* – by 1949 the problem film *The Snake Pit* received $417,000 for advertising, over three times the amount of any other Fox feature and half of the studio's yearly trade press advertising budget.[69] The example of Kramer's *The Defiant Ones* shows that the split between an 'exploitation ballyhoo campaign' and a '"prestige" campaign' was conscious and entrenched by the 1950s.[70] The late 1950s career of Kramer embodied the contradiction of being a producer–director about whom it was impossible to tease out the earnest cinematic statement from the commercial calculation. By that point, the prestige film's industrial transformation and the broader cultural elevation of the cinema had successfully converged.

Scholars working in the twin Marxist and Weberian traditions are fond of speaking of 'steering mechanisms', the underlying structural forces driving a historical phenomenon.[71] Two primary steering mechanisms – industrial reorganization and the middle class's reorientation in relation to the cinema – go a long way to explaining the relatively sudden historical changes to Hollywood's prestige film. Both modes of prestige cinema – the *Dodsworth* and the *Marty* – persist in the commercial US cinema marketplace today. Merchant–Ivory productions, after all, serve a similar role in today's industry to those of Samuel Goldwyn or David Selznick. Nevertheless, we have crossed another divide. The shift in balance between the two modes of prestige cinema was predicated on the particular history of individual films, as well as the particular circumstances of their audiences. A microhistory of these circumstances will flesh out film scholars' understanding of why Hollywood made the types of films it did and how they were received. Undoubtedly, such a history will document the exceptions and particulars that do not fit the main trajectory of the prestige picture in the mid twentieth century. The oversimplification imposed by the broader historical model, however, allows us to take an initial look at the fundamental steering mechanisms. Given how little film historians have found the prestige picture a worthy object of study, any distortion entailed in distilling the wealth of Hollywood's high-A film output is a necessary price to pay for the explanatory power that a structural history provides.

I would like to thank the anonymous readers at *Screen* for their constructive and valuable comments; Ned Comstock at USC's Doheny Library, Barbara Hall at the Margaret Herrick Library and the staff at UCLA's Charles E. Young Library special collections for their help; also Phil Rosen and Chuck Maland for their suggestions and advice.

68 Charles Schlaifer, memo to Spiras Skouros, 21 November 1947, Schlaifer Collection.

69 1949 advertising budget, 20th Century-Fox, Charles Schlaifer Collection.

70 George Thomas, internal UA publicity memo, Collection 161, Box 18, Stanley Kramer collection.

71 For instance, see Jurgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1972).

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cover illustration
La petite mort (François Ozon, 1995)

Sex after death: François Ozon's libidinal invasions

MAX CAVITCH

By now it should be well understood, within and beyond the bounds of gender and sexuality studies, that queer praxis has been both a sustained response to a particular history of loss and an important contribution to the ongoing psychosocial project of theorizing mourning. Among other things, 'queering' mourning has meant overruling reticence with the antagonistically explicit; displacing mortuary and memorial decorum with improvised and impatient performances; reconceiving illness, care and forms of farewell to accommodate new experiences of familiarity with, and estrangement from, bodies; freshly embracing the work of anger, ambivalence and melancholy. It has meant risking not only futures but the very consolations of futurity in favour of preposthumous resistance to the logics of reproduction and self-bestowal. And it has meant coming to terms with pleasure at the core of the experience of mourning.

To say that mourning has become a way of life is banal, for it has never been anything else. And the sanguine recommendation that loss be apprehended as 'productive rather than pathological' is too weak a tonic for many.[1] But to assert that mourning entails a phenomenology of pleasure remains as provocative today as it was when Karl Abraham and Sigmund Freud, early in the last century, noted with perplexity and discomfort the libidinal assertiveness of grief. 'My impression', Abraham wrote to Freud in 1922,

> is that a fair number of people show an increase in libido [*eine Steigerung der Libido*] some time after a bereavement. It shows itself in heightened sexual need [*gesteigertes sexuelles Bedürfnis*] and

1 David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, *Loss: the Politics of Mourning* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), p. ix.

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doi:10.1093/screen/hjm032

appears quite often to lead, e.g., to conception shortly after a bereavement. Sometime at your convenience I should like to know what you think about this and whether you can confirm this observation.[2]

Abraham persisted in his query, fruitlessly, in the face of Freud's repeated epistolary evasions. Maria Torok characterizes Freud's resistance in terms of 'the reluctance we all feel when, in a sacrilegious move, we want to grasp the inmost nature of mourning'. Her own clinical experience, however, confirms the intuition Abraham allowed himself to be discouraged from pursuing. '*The illness of mourning*', she writes,

> *does not result, as might appear, from the affliction caused by the objectal loss itself, but rather from the feeling of an irreparable crime: the crime of having been overcome with desire* [d'avoir été envahi de désir]*, of having been surprised by an overflow* [débordement] *of libido at the least appropriate moment, when it would behoove us to be grieved in despair.*
>
> These are the clinical facts. A measure of libidinal increase [*accroissement libidinal*] upon the object's death seems to be a widespread, if not universal phenomenon.[3]

There is no question of paraphilia in the cases Torok reports or in those she infers from her metapsychological analysis – no pathological excitation, for example, over the non-resisting, non-rejecting corpse. On the contrary, the conclusion she draws is that heightened sexual need is among the commonest sequelae of grief, due primarily to the imagoic congealment of unassimilated desire – the condensation of an unconscious fantasy of return to 'a satisfaction that was initially granted and then withdrawn'.[4] The surge of libido, then, is the ecstasy of the transient lifting of a shared repression, a hallucinatory gratification of a repressed desire, preserved as an 'exquisite' (literally, sought out) moment, or '"exquisite corpse" that together the dead and the survivors had both long before consigned to the grim tomb of repression'.[5]

Anyone who has ever experienced, within a context of libidinal disorder or demise, the sensation of objectless, intransigent waiting – waiting for something that will not come to term – might find a kind of solace in Torok's image of the fixated child's 'unwavering hope that one day the object would once again be *what it was* in the privileged moment'.[6] One's most acute and useless longing is validated, at least, by reflection. Moreover, such an image might encourage one to seek – in analysis, in aesthetic experience, in love – an improved figure for the dimly apprehended feeling linked to, constitutive of, that unrecoverable moment. What one wants, what one gets if one is lucky, is a better way of looking out, so to speak, for danger. Seeking the desires quelled by repression is akin to socially interdicted erotic pursuits, just as cruising, as a social courtship of risk, may be an end in itself as a form of libidinal expressivity. 'What are you waiting for?' is the unanswerable question

2 Karl Abraham to Sigmund Freud, 13 March 1922, in Ernst Falzeder (ed.), *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham, 1907–1925*, trans. Caroline Schwarzacher (London: Karnac, 2002), pp. 453–4. *The interpolated German is from Hilda C. Abraham and Ernst L. Freud, Sigmund Freud, Karl Abraham, Briefe 1907-1926* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1980), p. 306.

3 Maria Torok, 'The illness of mourning and the fantasy of the exquisite corpse' (1968), in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 108–10. Italics in original. The interpolated French is from Nicolas Abraham, *L'Écorce et le noyau: Collaboration et autres essays de Maria Torok* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978), pp. 232–3.

4 Torok, 'The illness of mourning', p. 121.

5 Ibid., p. 124.

6 Ibid. Italics in original.

posed to the unconscious ego that nevertheless rhetorically insists that the path to an answer is unobstructed ('C'mon, what are you *waiting* for?'). While waiting to know, or to be taught, the secret of our desire, we risk forfeiting the mobility of pleasure.

That refusing such a forfeiture, directly in the aftermath of loss, would draw reactions of incredulity and disapproval is still – even now, despite any and all positive revaluations of the counternormativity of libidinal events – in no way surprising. To be anything but bereft of libidinal sensations seems an offence against the gravity of loss; it runs counter to the intelligibility of strong, sincere attachment. Mourning is not a merely optional socially sanctioned form of inconsolability – an acceptable resistance to comfort that may or may not be indulged in by the bereaved according to internal promptings. On the contrary, mourning is a socially mandated incapacity to be consoled. To suit the social requirements for mourning decorum, this incapacity must be only temporary. Mourning that exceeds its term-limit is disturbing to others because it subverts faith in the ultimate efficacy of consolation. 'Blessed are they that mourn', according to the second beatitude, 'for they shall be comforted' (Matthew 5: 4). The blessing – and its secular counterpart, care – accrues to the eventual willingness to be comforted as well as to the sanctity of the experience of loss. Mourning must come to an end. But to come to an end, it must first run its course. A perceived 'failure' to mourn seems a dangerous refusal to avow or to respect the vulnerability of the libidinal self in the face of life's profound contingency. To refuse dissociation from one's desiring body in the immediate aftermath of loss is offensive, not because it is self-evidently in poor taste but because it courts disappointment so brazenly. Thus, the image of the desirous mourner is most often turned, through disapproval, into a reflection of contempt or erotic dread (in, for example, the figure of the horny widow).

This is probably why that which Torok calls 'the untoward arrival of this kind of libidinal invasion [*envahissement libidinal*]' has received so little serious cultural elaboration.[7] A famous exception to this rule is Bernardo Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* (1972), in which Marlon Brando's character, Paul, initiates an intense sexual affair with Maria Schneider's Jeanne in the immediate aftermath of his wife's suicide. Another exception to this rule is the far less well-known short film by François Ozon, *La petite mort*/*Little Death* (1995), that I will treat here as an example of what queer praxis – cinema at a far remove from Bertolucci's melodramatization of a narcissistic will to self-perpetuation[8] – can make of desire that refuses to be the occasion for its own destruction.

Little Death is the story of Paul, a twenty-something photographer whose father, from whom he is estranged, is dying. The film's opening shot is of a black-and-white photo of Paul, taken on the day of his birth (figure 1). In the voiceover, he explains that a copy was sent right away to his father, who was away on business at the time. His father's reply was: 'This monster can't be my son. He's too ugly. There must be some

7 Ibid., p. 110. The interpolated French is from Abraham, *L'Écorce et le noyau*, p. 233.

8 After Jeanne shoots him, Paul speaks his final words: 'Our children ... our children ... our children will remember'.

Fig. 1.
All images from *La petite mort* (François Ozon, 1995)

mistake.'[9] This piece of family lore – anecdote of an archetypal rejection – stands, in this short film, for the entire history of the father–son relationship, from the narrator's birth to his father's last illness. The first action sequence takes place in bed, where Paul demands anxiously of his lover, Martial: 'Honestly, do you think I'm ugly?' 'Hideous', Martial teases, and then coaxes Paul – whose photographic speciality is capturing men's faces at the moment of orgasm – into allowing himself to be photographed while masturbating.

The walls of their apartment are plastered with such photographs of the blissed-out, contorted faces of various men, as Paul's sister Camille discovers when she arrives to take Paul to visit his ailing father. Camille is intrigued: 'They're pretending?' 'No, of course not', Martial replies, 'otherwise there'd be no point.' 'Look at that picture there', he tells her, pointing to one of himself. 'You see? I have a bit of cum on my cheek' (figure 2).

Fig. 2.

9 *La petite mort, X2000: the Collected Shorts of François Ozon,* DVD, directed by François Ozon (KimStim, 2001). All translations from the original French dialogue are my own.

It has been six years since Paul has seen his father, whose homophobic alienation from his son is strongly implied, and their initial reencounter at the hospital goes badly. But Paul returns on his own, with his camera, to uncover and capture surreptitiously his father's naked, sleeping body on film (figure 3). The immodesty of Paul's exposure of his father's nakedness is compounded by the implied publicity of the camera. To whom will he show these photos? Where might they be displayed? He takes his shots quickly and from many angles before his sister returns to discover what she perceives to be a shocking lack of filial deference. In effect, Camille takes the place of Ham's brothers in Ozon's refiguration of one of the most famous and sexually ambiguous scenes of oedipal transgression: the exposure of Noah's nakedness in Genesis 9: 20–25. The same questions of incest and homosexual cathexis hover unanswered around both scenes. Does the son desire the father's naked body? Has the son ventured some sort of sexual conquest in aggressively drawing attention to the father's weakness? Is the son's immodest look symbolic of rape or castration?

Camille is bewildered and outraged by her brother's actions. After quickly restoring her father's bedclothes, she tussles with Paul in an effort to get him and his camera out of their father's hospital room and to force him to account for his actions. But Paul is contemptuous of her reaction. Before walking away, he says, 'Do you ask a baby for permission to take its picture?' By which he seems to be asking if he, as a baby, was able to give permission for the photo that prompted his father's disavowal of him and that still reminds him of their irreparably wounded attachment. Now that I am a man, he seems to imply, can I perhaps introduce my dying father to something like the specific sense of risk that characterizes my experience of my sexuality? Paul, like so many gay men of his age, is coming to know that his own particular history of childhood attachment and loss is more fully on display – to himself and to others – by virtue of the adult sexuality he refuses to renounce.

Fig. 3.

In the immediate aftermath of their father's death, it is precisely this refusal of Paul's that will seem to Camille – and undoubtedly to many of the film's viewers – to be an obscene affront to the father's memory. When the call comes from his sister, telling him his father has died, Paul reaches for Martial. As Martial comforts him, Paul becomes urgently aroused. He experiences the news of his father's death almost immediately as a libidinal invasion, which, as Ozon shows us in a scene of post-coital tenderness, restores what had been the rapidly crumbling intimacy of Paul's relationship with Martial. Our view of their lovemaking, however, is displaced by a series of close up shots of black-and-white photos of the mingling but motionless naked limbs and torsos of unidentifiable men. Are these photos of Paul and Martial – Ozon's mannered, abstracted depiction of what might otherwise have seemed too lurid or improbable: hot sex driven by grief? Or are they the photos of other men, the other men whose faces cover the walls – fetish-like photos that adorn, protect or magically enhance the realm of Paul and Martial's erotic life? Either way, the images suggest the importance to the filmmaker of a fixed formal quality complementing the social transgressiveness of their desire's filmic enactment.

But perhaps this quality not so much complements the transgressiveness as opposes it. One thinks of Roland Barthes's preference for photography '*in opposition* to the Cinema' – a preference, that is, for photography as an opportunity to dismiss 'sociological commentary', whether on the family or on its counter-bourgeois manifestation in the intimate sphere of a couple of gay Parisians. 'What did I care', Barthes asks himself in *Camera Lucida* (1980), evidently with Pierre Bourdieu's 1965 study *Photography: a Middle-brow Art* in mind, 'about the Photograph as family rite ... nothing but the trace of a social protocol of integration, intended to reassert the Family, etc.'[10] In 1988, Ozon's first film, the seven-minute *Photo de famille*, registered his own protest against treating photography as a mass social practice for integrating and protecting the family. Employing his own relatives as actors, Ozon shows us what seems to be a very happy family of four having dinner together and afterwards dispersing to various parts of the house. The son then proceeds to poison his mother, stab his sister and smother his father, and to reassemble and arrange their corpses on the living-room sofa for a family snapshot, in which he includes himself with the help of the time-delay feature on his instamatic.

The photographer-as-wayward-son figure returns in Ozon's later work – not only in *Little Death* but also in one of his most recent features, *Le temps qui reste/Time to Leave* (2005), which is the second film, according to Ozon, in an uncompleted trilogy of features about mourning.[11] Romain, thirty-one, is a fashion photographer who learns after collapsing at a shoot that he is dying of cancer, dying quickly. In the aftermath of his diagnosis Romain goes through a variety of reversals of feeling, several of which have importantly to do with his attitude towards children: his sister's children, himself as a child and ultimately his own

10 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1981), pp. 3, 7. Italics in original.

11 'The idea was to do a trilogy on mourning, beginning with *Under the Sand*, an austere melodrama about coping with the death of another. *Time to Leave* is about coping with one's own death. And the third part, which I'll do someday perhaps, will be about the death of a child.' François Ozon, 'Interview on the film *Time to Leave*', *François-Ozon.com*. URL: http://www.francois-ozon.com/francais/entretiens/le-temps-qui-reste.html [accessed 6 July 2007]. My translation.

offspring, the child he conceives with an infertile straight couple but does not live to see (though he does have time to make the unborn child the sole beneficiary of his will). *Time to Leave* makes the photographer himself – the single, gay photographer, immobilized and silhouetted in the film's final shot of his sunset death – the trace of 'a social protocol of integration, intended to reassert the Family'. In other words, *Time to Leave* returns us to the melodramatization of the narcissistic will to self-perpetuation for which the family may be the universal alibi.

Little Death does something else, something closer to Barthes's meditation on photography in *Camera Lucida*. Rejecting the sociological vantage point of Bourdieu and others, Barthes aspires to a critical–expressive discourse that would be adequate to confront, above all, 'that rather terrible thing which is there in every photograph: the return of the dead [*retour du mort*]'.[12] For Barthes the photograph has a special relation to *jouissance*, the bliss that is close to wounding and death, and he is most interested in the element of the photograph (he calls this element the *punctum*) that 'rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me ... that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)'.[13] Barthes's *punctum* shares something of its explosive, unpredictable nature with the 'untoward arrival', the *envahissement libidinal*, that Torok links to object-loss, the return of death. In both cases, what Torok would call the conscious ego has the impression of being the site, but not the source, of an unsettling phenomenon. Whether the invasion comes from within or without, the experience of its untoward arrival is the same.

Like *Camera Lucida*, *Little Death* encourages the exploration of photography 'as a wound [*blessure*]'.[14] In *Little Death*, the photographic wounds gape overdeterminedly. First there is the photo with which the film opens; looking at it, Paul experiences anew the psychic wound his father has inflicted. Paul's photos of various men in the throes of orgasm interrupt the temporality of pleasure. They also provoke a discomfort in Camille that is metonymic of their father's homophobia. The photos Paul takes of his father's vulnerable body figuratively dismember him, and Camille is keenly distressed at what she considers to be a violation of their father's dignity. Paul pastes one of the photos Martial took of him coming over the offensive baby picture that has been in view on one of the walls (figures 4a and 4b). In their bedroom are displayed dozens of images of Saint Sebastian. Later, Paul cuts the eyes out of a photo of his father's face in order to fashion a mask for himself, which he holds up to his face while gazing at his (father's) reflection in a mirror (figure 5).

This eerie scene, filmed – virtually ensanguined – in the blood-red monochrome of the darkroom's safelight, evokes the common association of photograph and death mask: an imprint of the real aligned with mortality.[15] Paul, in his darkroom, is playing with a semblance of his father's actual death, not only by rendering him motionless in a photographic print, but also by cutting the eyes out of that print, revealing the emptiness, the lifelessness behind them.

12 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 9. The interpolated French is from Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire: Note sur la photographie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), p. 23.

13 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, pp. 26–7

14 Ibid., p. 21. The interpolated French is from Barthes, *La chambre claire*, p. 42.

15 André Bazin compares photographic realism to 'the molding of death masks', in *What Is Cinema?* trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), p. 12. Similarly, Susan Sontag writes of the photograph as 'something directly stenciled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask', in *On Photography* (New York, NY: Penguin, 1977), p. 154. Elaborating on photography's 'special status with regard to the real', Rosalind Krauss writes that 'photography is an imprint or transfer off the real; it is a photochemically processed trace causally connected to the thing in the world to which it refers in a manner parallel to that of fingerprints or footprints or the rings of water that cold glasses leave on tables. The photograph is thus generically distinct from painting or sculpture or drawing. On the family tree of images it is closer to palm prints, death masks, the Shroud of Turin, or the tracks of gulls on beaches. For technically and semiologically speaking, drawings and paintings are icons, while photographs are indexes'. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), p. 110.

Fig. 4a

Fig. 4b

However, he then transforms the photograph into a different kind of mask by holding it up to his face, scrutinizing his own reappearance in the mirror through his father's enucleated sockets. With Paul's eyes

Fig. 5.

now his, the father, too, makes a kind of reappearance as the menace of incorporation, as the imago into which Paul's unassimilated desire has congealed, along with the hope of its future assimilation. In the darkroom, Paul rehearses the objectal dependency that threatens to overwhelm him in his mourning.

While Paul is in the darkroom, his father is dying. Indeed, his father may already be dead. In the next scene (it could be mere hours or many days later), Martial is vacuuming while Paul lies on the carpet, shirtless, wearing sunglasses. It is not clear why he is wearing sunglasses indoors – there is the implication of a sunlamp or opened terrace door, perhaps. In any case, Ozon succeeds in creating the fanciful impression that Paul's eyes have been weakened or even destroyed in the previous scene – that in the oedipal violence of the darkroom scene, Paul has somehow blinded himself. There seems also to be a kind of playfulness here, on Ozon's part, regarding the glare of cinema. If not for the vacuum cleaner nudging his shoulder, Paul – shot from above against the rich blue carpet, golden hair slicked back and ashtray to hand – looks as if he could be a movie star on the beach at Cannes, seeking both sunlight and limelight, while also affecting the symbolic veil of celebrity – dark glasses. In other words, Ozon may want us to see Paul at this moment as being interrupted – first by Martial's vacuuming and then by the phone call from his sister – in a daydream of desirability, of narcissistic fantasy, of being picture-perfect.

As the film's opening sequence makes clear, Paul experiences the story of his father's early rejection as a prohibition against homosexual attachment. His father's refusal of attachment ('he's too ugly to be mine') is repeated as the question ('am I ugly?') Paul poses to his homosexual object choice. Paul's symbolic castration of his father (cutting out his eyes) entails a double disfiguration: he mimes an attack on the paternal authority internalized as superego, and at the same time he defaces himself in order to become a figure for the impossible closure ('I am my father') of the endless series of substitutions that sustains his ego-constituting struggle over an original homosexual attachment to his father.

In the film's final scenes, Camille hands Paul the sum of his paternal legacy, a box of his father's favourite photographs. 'I know you don't want anything from him. But he was counting on me to give this to you.' Flipping through them later, on his own, Paul discovers an envelope with his name written on it. It contains what is presumably a photograph of Paul as a baby, being held closely and kissed by his father (figure 6). What Paul does not know is that the envelope and the photo were placed in the box by Camille shortly before she handed it to him. The photo she has planted among the rest is both a blessing and a *blessure*, a conferral of well being that is also a tearing of the fabric of truth that Paul has spent his life weaving. The appearance of this photo brings the film to an end. It seems to leave Paul with nothing more to say.

Ozon's ending is nonetheless eloquent. The asymmetrical meaning of the photos that open and close the film – in the former Paul is ugly and

Fig. 6.

abandoned, in the latter Paul is beautiful and embraced – is all the more poignant and formally sophisticated for the lie, or lies, upon which it is based. Camille's subterfuge is motivated by her plan for Paul's freedom (freedom from their father, from oppressive ceremonies such as the funeral Paul has chosen not to attend, from the homophobia of bourgeois family life) – a freedom she nevertheless begrudges him and envies deeply. She even intuits the libidinal invasion precipitated by their father's death. Why bother coming to your own father's funeral, she sarcastically demands. 'You'd rather stay in bed with Martial ... he's a good fuck, huh?'

Camille cannot grant herself the freedom to imagine how fucking Martial and reacting to his father's death might be anything other than incommensurable. As yet, even Paul has no language for their commensurability. Indeed, *Little Death* contains no diegetic expression of their commensurability, but rather frames a view of such a discourse just coming into being. It drives into visibility the untoward arrival of the 'exquisite corpse' that he and his father 'had both long before consigned to the grim tomb of repression'. It challenges the conventional sense of what it means to be comforted in one's mourning, and of what the parameters of that mourning and that comfort might be. The image Camille has in her head of Paul and Martial at home, fucking during her father's funeral, discomfits Camille precisely because she has been brought to the edge of her own wishful identification with Paul: the child who, unlike her, is neither the father's business partner, nor the attentive presence at his sickbed, nor aggrieved by sexual loneliness; the child who, unlike Camille, is lucky enough to have an actual lover to reach for when the exquisite corpse makes itself felt as an opportunity to experience the unconscious life of pleasure less obliquely.

But if it were just about luck, we would not be left with the problem of sexual determinism with which *Little Death*, as a film by a gay

director about a gay character, seems to confront us. The freedom of de-repression seems to belong to Paul not only in his estrangement from heterosexual culture – an estrangement characterized by the inutility to him of what Lee Edelman calls 'the specifically heterosexual alibi of reproductive necessity'[16] – but also, concretely, in the realm of gay coupledom. Indeed Paul and Martial are the only sexual couple depicted in the film. Camille, in contrast, makes much of her sexual loneliness, and their father no longer seems to have a wife to care for him. The first mention of Paul's mother, in the opening voiceover, is also the last reference to her in the film. Her total disappearance (is she dead, divorced, or just conspicuously unobtrusive?) cannot help but suggest, along with the apparent childlessness of both Paul and Camille, a rupture in the logic of reproduction that gives sex its only socially acceptable relation to grief. Sexual desire in recently bereaved parents, for example, is often credited to the 'natural' impulses to replace the lost child and to restore the parents' sense of having a secure relation to their posthumous futures through sexual reproduction.[17] Transcendence, rather than *jouissance*, legitimates sexual pleasure in the procreative bereaved.

Of course, this goes beyond heterosexuality. Since the 1980s, the so-called gay baby boom has been attributed in part to a conscious repopulation project in response to the AIDS-related decimation of gay communities, even as donor insemination technologies have contributed to the de-eroticization of reproduction. More recently, the increasing sociopolitical conservatism of the gay West has enabled the championing of the marital-family model as an appropriate response to the lethality of homophobia. But Paul and Martial, as a gay couple, pursue their bodies' pleasures in a way that is distinctly contraceptive. That 'bit of cum on my cheek' that Martial points out to Camille is precisely the semiotic index that links nonprocreative sex to excessive, wasteful and potentially fatal self-expenditure. Orgasm is called 'the little death' because it has been understood since antiquity, in various terms, to prefigure and even to bring about the death of the individual.[18] Ozon's titular use of the phrase refers most obviously to Paul's photographic speciality. But the film is also about a momentous death – the death of Paul's father – and the ideality of a grief that could find its way back through disinhibition, even if only temporarily and unavowably, to the unassimilable desire that *makes* Paul's father his father. Who but a gay man, *Little Death* seems to ask, would let himself be driven so incautiously to the ground of his subjection, to the point of loss of a homosexual attachment that anyone could mourn, as Judith Butler has argued, 'only with great difficulty'?[19]

It is remarkable, given Ozon's prolific output and success in making films that revel in impropriety and trouble notions of stable sexual identities, that no major critics and theorists of the New Queer Cinema discuss any of the seventeen shorts[20] and eleven features[21] he has directed

16 Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 13.

17 The research on even this presumably more palatable naturalization of desire in cases of parental bereavement is astonishingly meagre. What little data has been published is based largely on the self-reported experience of heterosexual married couples, and the focus tends to be on sexual behaviour, not on the experience of sexual desire. See, for example, Mary E. Swigar et al., 'Grieving and unplanned pregnancy', *Psychiatry*, no. 39 (1976), pp. 72–80; Sherry E. Johnson, 'Sexual intimacy and replacement children after the death of a child', *Omega: the Journal of Death and Dying*, vol. 15, no. 2 (1984), pp. 109–18; Annelies K. Hagemeister and Paul C. Rosenblatt, 'Grief and the sexual relationship of couples who have experienced a child's death', *Death Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3 (1997), pp. 231–52.

18 The antique understanding is discussed by Foucault in *The Use of Pleasure: Volume II of The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, NY: Vintage, 1990), pp. 125–39. On the relation between erotic pleasure and fatally extravagant waste, see George Batailles, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. Mary Dalwood (San Francisco, CA: City Lights, 1986), pp. 170–71.

19 Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 138.

20 *Photo de famille* (1988); *Les doigts dans le ventre* (1988); *Mes parents un jour d'été* (1990); *Une goutte de sang* (1991); *Le trou madame* (1991); *Peau contre peau* (1991); *Deux plus un* (1991); *Thomas reconstitué* (1992); *Victor* (1993); *Une rose entre nous* (1994); *Action vérité* (1994); *La petite mort* (1995); *Une robe d'été* (1996); *L'homme idéal* (1996); *X 2000* (1998); *Scènes de lit* (1998); *Un lever de rideau* (2006).

21 *Jospin s'éclaire* (1995); *Regarde la mer* (1997); *Sitcom* (1998); *Les amants criminals* (1999); *Gouttes d'eau sur pierres brûlantes* (2000); *Sous le sable* (2000); *8 femmes* (2002); *Swimming Pool* (2003); *5x2* (2004); *Le temps qui reste* (2005); *Angel* (2006).

since 1988.[22] In virtually all of these films, Ozon formally, as well as thematically, displaces, mocks or otherwise defamiliarizes the conventions of erotic narrative. His renditions of the erotics of mourning can be particularly startling, in part because they carry the implicit proposition that mourning *is* an erotic narrative, that sexual desire does not simply evaporate in the face of loss. For example, at the end of *Gouttes d'eau sur pierres brûlantes/Water Drops on Burning Rocks* (2000) – based on an unproduced play by Fassbinder – the suicide of young Franz briefly interrupts the troilist escapades of his lover Léopold, his girlfriend Anna and Léopold's transsexual ex-lover Véra. After discovering the poisoned Franz and helplessly watching him die, Vera suggests that they call the police. But Léopold insists there will be plenty of time for that after they have finished having sex. The comic horror of their return to the bedroom cannot be dismissed as merely absurd; the scene is cruel, soulless and manic, largely in reaction to the claustrophobic domestic life that Franz has been suffering at Léopold's sadistic hands. It is easily imagined as Franz's libidinally subtended fantasy of his own death. Suicide is the short-circuiting of derepression. It is the melancholic's violent negation of a dawning realization that he will never be able to experience the pleasure of being mourned.

In the more exquisite and complex film, *Sous le sable/Under the Sand* (2000), mourning takes hold of Marie Drillon – whose husband Jean has vanished during their beach holiday – as an exceptionally durable hallucinatory wishful psychosis. Jean continues to exist for her in the rounds of daily life. She hallucinates having breakfast with him. She makes excuses for his absence to their friends. Everyone around her knows that Jean is almost certainly dead – and that, in any case, Marie has not seen him since his disappearance from the beach. They watch her, giving her the extra time she seems to need to test reality, while also very gently encouraging her to recognize and mourn Jean's absence and get on with her life.

What makes *Under the Sand* far more than a simple study of denial is the stunning intricacy with which Marie's imaginary projections of her husband coincide with both her erotic fantasy life and her actual affair with Vincent, whom she meets at a dinner party shortly after Jean's disappearance. Marie wrestles with her attraction to Vincent and even discusses her flirtation with the hallucinatory Jean, as if to secure his approval of a new or as yet unquelled desire. (Prior to Jean's disappearance, the film establishes the couple's affectionate but melancholy intimacy.) She models for Jean the dress she will wear on her next date with Vincent. After returning home from this date, Marie lies on her bed and imagines being undressed and caressed by the hands of both men. Ozon shows us the two pairs of hands removing her shoes, argyling their way up her legs and playing with her breasts. As she begins to masturbate, the hands disappear. In a later scene, as Marie and Vincent are fucking in her bed, she sees Jean step into the bedroom's open

22 There is scarcely a trace of Ozon's work to be found in any of the following: Bad Object-Choices (ed.), *How Do I Look: Queer Film and Video* (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1991); 'New queer cinema', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 2, no. 5 (1992), pp. 30–39; Martha Gever, Pratibha Parmar and John Greyson (eds), *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993); Paul Burston, *What Are You Looking At? Queer Sex, Style and Cinema* (London: Cassell, 1995); Ellis Hanson (ed.), *Out Takes: Essays on Queer Theory and Film* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Thomas Waugh, *The Fruit Machine: Twenty Years of Writings on Queer Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); Richard Dyer, *Now You See It: Studies in Lesbian and Gay Film*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003); Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin (eds), *Queer Cinema: the Film Reader* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004); Michele Aaron (ed.), *New Queer Cinema: a Critical Reader* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004). Michelle Chilcoat helps break this silence with her essay, 'Queering the family in François Ozon's *Sitcom*', in Robin Griffiths (ed.), *Queer Cinema in Europe* (Bristol: Intellect, 2007).

doorway, and they smile at each other while she and Vincent continue having sex.

Having rejected her friend's suggestion that she see a psychiatrist, it seems that Marie has found a different way to deconstruct the imago she continues to project as an image of her dead husband. She seems to find herself inside – which, diegetically, means conscious of and visible to us – the unconscious reorganization of her object relations. It is as if we are able to watch the 'broadening and enriching' of Marie's ego as 'unconscious, nameless, or repressed libido' is introduced into it through the process of what Torok, after Ferenczi, calls introjection. In other words, Ozon portrays simultaneously the hallucinatory fulfilment of incorporation and 'the desire of introjection it masks'.

> While the introjection of desires puts an end to objectal dependency, incorporation of the object creates or reinforces imaginal ties and hence dependency. Installed in place of the lost object, the incorporated object continues to recall the fact that something else was lost: the desires quelled by repression.[23]

Charlotte Rampling's inspired portrayal of Marie allows Ozon to capture and prolong the illness of mourning ('the feeling of an irreparable crime') that Torok locates within a larger category she terms 'neurosis of transition'.[24] *Under the Sand* is Ozon's and Rampling's attempt to find a visual language for incorporation that would also reveal it figurally to be 'the disguised language of as yet unborn and unintrojected desires'.[25] In the morgue scene, late in the film, we watch Marie looking at what we cannot see: Jean's sea-logged, grossly distended and putrescent corpse. Marie's insistence on viewing the corpse, very much against the advice of the pathologist, helps make her gaze itself an apt figure for a disturbing avowal of violent rage at Jean's abandonment of her. In this figural sense, her look is what makes Jean's corpse so awful to behold, the cause of Jean's macerated flesh, blackened skin, unrecognizable features – so horrible a spectacle that Ozon does not permit the audience to see it. That is, he anticipates our revulsion at the rage we must nevertheless acknowledge that Marie has every reason to feel at her abandonment (the question of suicide is never resolved). Clearly, the repression of this rage has been a necessary and sustaining condition for Marie's hallucinatory wishful psychosis. Its figural expression in the morgue scene is not in itself a sign that Marie has accepted the reality of Jean's death (in the next scene she refuses to acknowledge that the watch found with the corpse belonged to her husband). But the conflict has at least momentarily become visible. The remainder of the film reveals with brilliant clarity and pathos that this conflict is, for Marie, potentially insurmountable, and thus one with which she might have to continue to live.

Like *Little Death*, *Under the Sand* ends with what the viewer knows to be a deception. The man towards whom Marie runs as he stands in the distance looking at the sea is not actually Jean—no more than the photo of Paul and his father was actually cherished and bequeathed to him by

23 Torok, 'The illness of mourning', p. 110.

24 Ibid., p. 110.

25 Ibid., pp. 113–15.

his father. Yet, neither film's ending feels like a betrayal of its central character. Indeed, they are triumphs of delicacy and tact. Our last sight of Marie shows her running away from us, shrinking into the distance of the long shot in a way that asks us to view her pursuit of the illusory Jean without scepticism or contempt. In Paul's case, we see not a retreating figure but a face in closeup, as he looks up from the surprising documentary evidence of his father's early embrace. The actor, François Delaive, looks not directly at the viewer but into the unseen distance behind us, with a look we have seen before: the inscrutable look of orgasm that Paul has devoted his photographic career to capturing. There is no dramatic contortion, no gasp or cry, just the subtle rippling of a pulse from below. His head tips back slightly as it hits him. His mouth opens just a bit too quickly, as if he had momentarily forgotten how to breathe, then he lets the breath go as if saying goodbye to an ancient thought. The physiognomic play of surprise, relief, happiness, and a vague regret just coming into being that Delaive reproduces so finely and simply in those few closing seconds is the actor's perfect response to the director's demand for the character, that he not be seen as acquiescing in a deception (tricked by the planted snapshot) but rather submitting to a transformation, the consequences of which are not for us to know.

Thus, it is not at all clear how Paul will mourn his father or what that mourning will mean for other erotic dimensions of his life. The film ends with a view not of Paul's face but of blurred train carriages hurtling along the tracks that (we now realize) lie between the actor Delaive and the telephoto lens of Ozon's camera. In the final five seconds before the credits roll, the screen is filled with the shuttling from left to right of rectangular blue panels (train windows out of focus) that, segmented and scrolling by, bear a fanciful resemblance to film frames. *Little Death* ends reflexively by reminding us in a particularly forcible way of the effects that framing and cutting can have on the perceived continuity of erotic life. In real life, the death of a loved one is like a shock cut, and our learned response to the shock is the overcompensating purposiveness of mourning – not grief alone, but the conventions of mourning insisted upon by the ego as a kind of parapraxis of desire. Mourning misspeaks our desire, Ozon observes, not the other way around, and this makes mourning all the more unbearable insofar as we experience, as intrapsychic conflict, its alienated relation to the libidinal excitations of loss.

This essay took shape in the generous environment of the University of Pennsylvania's Cinema Studies Program, and I am especially grateful to its director, Tim Corrigan, for essential advice and encouragement. Warm thanks as well to Heather Love, Patty White, Amy Kaplan and *Screen*'s anonymous reviewers for illuminating readings of various drafts. Lee Edelman, Ellis Hanson and Chris Looby shared their enthusiasm for Ozon's work, and Michelle Chilcoat graciously shared her own work on Ozon while also managing to save me from some embarrassing errors.

Sex and the censors: the *femme fatale* in Juan Antonio Bardem's *Muerte de un ciclista*

JO EVANS

The establishing montage of Juan Antonio Bardem's *Muerte de un ciclista/Death of a Cyclist* (1955) represents a clear challenge to the Spanish censors of the 1950s.[1] It begins with a long-shot of an isolated country road. A cyclist enters the title frame and disappears over the horizon (figure 1). A car appears over the same horizon, driving erratically towards the viewer, and a cut to a medium closeup shows a couple looking back in alarm (figure 2). In a second long-shot, the man kneels over the cyclist (who is out of frame) and the woman stands behind him in a long, dark, fur coat. Her high-heeled shoes stand out against her pale stockings (figure 3). She hisses at the man to come away from the injured cyclist and the action cuts to a long-shot of a rainy, crepuscular, urban exterior. Headlights emerge from the light of the streetlamps as the same car pulls over. The woman clutches the man and says she is frightened. She drops him off, then drives away. The man stands at the side of the road, lights a cigarette and broods. A jump-cut to medium, interior closeup shows the same woman kissing a similar-looking man (figure 4).[2] The focus on the kiss is held, before pulling back to reveal that this is the same woman with her husband at a party where guests are sparring verbally about adulterous spouses. The woman moves to a piano to talk to the pianist. Their dialogue is delivered in an undertone, in the question/answer form of a police interrogation, and suggests that the pianist has seen her with her lover. He tells her that he is improvising a song called Blackmail [*Chantaje*].[3]

1 Sarah Wright provides a fascinating insight into the attempts of fascist ideologues to control Spanish film viewers in 'Dropping the mask: theatricality and absorption in Sáenz de Heredia's *Don Juan*', *Screen*, vol. 46, no. 4 (2005), pp. 415–31.

2 The similarity is due to the 'Franco moustache', so uniform that Bardem cites his friend, Paulino Garegorri, as being the only Spaniard in 1949 with a beard. Juan Antonio Bardem, *Y todavía sigue: Memorias de un hombre de cine* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2002), pp. 66, 74.

3 Marsha Kinder expands on the reference to Hitchcock's *Blackmail* (1929) in *Blood Cinema: the Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1993), p. 77.

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doi:10.1093/screen/hjm033

Fig. 1.
All images from *Muerte de un ciclista* (Juan Antonio Bardem, 1955)

There is much in this opening montage to preoccupy the Spanish censors [*Junta de Clasificación y Censura*] of the 1950s.[4] The implied illicit affair is an affront to the National Catholic moral code underpinning the ideology of the Franco regime, a code founded on the sanctity of the family and strict gender roles dating back to Spanish Golden Age conventions, according to which the *honor* (honour and reputation) of Spanish men depended upon the *honra* (sexual purity and fidelity) of their women. This opening sequence clearly establishes that María-José is not a honourable woman: she drives the car that runs over the cyclist; she hisses at her lover to come away and leave him to his fate; by implication, she is responsible for the event that gives the film its title and for the crime (of leaving him to die) that motivates the diegesis. This mise-en-scene of her culpability is then compounded by the associative jump-cut to the kiss that indicates she is the adulterous partner in the clandestine affair. This in turn indicates that she is guilty of a second crime, as the definition of adultery was gender-coded by the regime. John Hooper notes that

> although adultery by either sex was a crime, punishable by between six months and six years in prison, there were different criteria for men and women. Adultery by a woman was a crime whatever the circumstances, but adultery by a man only constituted an offence if he committed it in the family home, or if he were living with his mistress, or if his adulterous behaviour was public knowledge.[5]

4 Rob Stone provides information about the historical context, censorship and making of this and a number of other Bardem films in *Spanish Cinema* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2002), pp. 37–51.

5 See John Hooper, *The New Spaniards* (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 167; Geraldine Scanlon, *La polémica feminista en la España contemporánea: 1868–1974* (Madrid: Akal, 1986); Carmen Martín Gaite, *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1987).

Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.

A pull-back from the extended closeup of the kiss shows this to be a 'legitimate' gesture of affection (between husband and wife), and yet the jump-cut from the lover left brooding at the roadside highlights ironically the unrepresentable 'illegitimate' relationship. Furthermore, the mise-en-scene of the party (via the kiss, the setting and the dialogue between guests) establishes that both the marriage and the relationships among this Nationalist elite are a form of brittle masquerade sustained by play-acting, coded conversations, word games, lies, secrets and potential blackmail. Finally, the pseudo-interrogation format of the cryptic exchange at the piano alludes to life in a police state, and all of the above would have alerted censors to the potentially explosive subtext of this film.

The representation of the *femme fatale* in Bardem's neorealist/film noir hybrid may, with a quarter of a century of increasingly sophisticated readings to guide us, appear formulaic.[6] However, this essay will argue that despite the constraints of historical context and censorship, she remains profoundly transgressive. She has the makings of a classic *femme fatale*, and this five-minute opening sequence clearly establishes her power within the diegesis: her hissed command is obeyed, her Rivierian masquerade of 'neediness' secures her lover's collusion and the abrupt jump-cut indicates the ease with which she swaps her mask of vulnerability for that of the society hostess, not to mention one man for another. I describe her claim that she is frightened as a form of 'Rivierian

6 See Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1991); E. Ann Kaplan (ed.), *Women in Film Noir* (London: British Film Institute, 1999); Stella Bruzzi, *Undressing Cinema: Clothing and Identity in the Movies* (Oxford: Routledge, 1997), pp. 120–144.

Fig. 4.

masquerade' because María-José exaggerates her vulnerability when she needs Juan's support. This is clarified as manipulative when she tries unsuccessfully, at a later stage in the film, to use the same technique on her husband, who has fewer illusions about her. Joan Riviere's interpretation of female sexuality and gender roles is now dated, but her attempt to theorize a distinction between 'genuine womanliness and the "masquerade"' remains groundbreaking.[7] Her case study has come to be seen as iconic for its discussion of a 'masquerade' of femininity worn as a defence against anxiety or out of fear of retribution; for her conclusion that 'womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask',[8] and, finally, for the suggestion (by implication) that Freud's well-known confusion over femininity – '*Was ist das ewige Weibliche?*' – is a projection of 'the conception of womanliness as a mask, behind which man suspects some hidden danger'.[9]

The fear that overt femininity masks a 'hidden danger' is, of course, a factor in the exaggerated femininity of the *femme fatale* in film noir. Mary Ann Doane's study of the *femme fatale* states that 'she never really is what she seems to be. She harbours a threat which is not entirely legible, predictable, or manageable'[10] and that she personifies 'a secret, something which must be aggressively revealed, unmasked, discovered'.[11] Annette Kuhn argues persuasively elsewhere that film noir's compulsive return to the 'scene of the crime' may be read as a projection of the Freudian *Unheimliche*: the compulsive return to an event the conscious mind has censored and to which it is doomed to return in order to resolve the original trauma. Kuhn links this unconscious function of censorship with the conscious function of the Board of Censors, to suggest that the element of the 'uncanny' in the compulsive return to the scene of the crime is often 'literally *embodied*' in the figure of the *femme fatale* who must be punished.[12] In this way, the *femme fatale* (consciously controlled at the level of what can and cannot be shown on screen and by what can and cannot happen in the diegesis) becomes a cathartic vehicle for the representation and containment (via her come-uppance) of the attraction to the socially transgressive. Kuhn also notes that US censorship was 'directed predominantly at narrative themes and dialogue ... leaving visual cinematic codes as a site onto which prohibited representations could at times, consciously or otherwise, be displaced'.[13] The underlying irony that Kuhn illustrates in her analysis of *The Big Sleep* is that official censorship, working actively to suppress subversive onscreen imagery, may reproduce, through the visual displacements directors consciously or unconsciously employ, the very meanings it seeks to repress. Such a tension between conscious censorship, visual displacement and unconscious return is also at work, I shall argue here, in the politically transgressive representation of the *femme fatale* in Bardem's hybrid noir text.

The *femme fatale* in Spanish film has received little critical attention to date, no doubt due in part to the uneasy relationship of the regime (1939–75) to images of dangerous, sexualized femininity, particularly

7 Joan Riviere's 1929 article 'Womanliness as a masquerade', in Athol Hughes (ed.), *The Inner World and Joan Riviere. Collected Papers: 1920–1958* (New York, NY and London: Karnac Books, 1991), pp. 90–101, p. 94.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., p. 101.

10 Doane, *Femmes Fatales*, p. 1.

11 Ibid.

12 Annette Kuhn, *The Power of the Image: Essays on Representation and Sexuality* (Boston, MA and London: Routledge, 1985), pp. 74–95, p. 95.

13 Ibid., p. 94.

during the ideologically uncertain post-Civil War period of the 1940s that provided such fertile ground for the classic *femmes fatales* of US film noir.[14] This is not to suggest that regime-condoned popular film ignored the market potential of the sexually attractive woman who functions 'outside' the social norm. The star persona of Lola Flores, for example, is firmly located within the tradition of the sexually attractive female 'outsider' via her representation of the idealized figure of the gypsy in wonderfully melodramatic and still popular musicals, such as *María de la O* (Ramón Torrado, 1958). There is also a well-documented tradition of 'dangerous women' in Spanish film ranging from Florián Rey's pre-Civil War Magdalena[15] to José Luis Borau's murderous, end-of-regime Martina[16] and on to Almodóvar's malicious Transition matriarchs and the *femmes fatales* of post-Dictatorship neonoir.[17] Many of these could be interrogated for their 'fatal' qualities, but the focus here is on a 'classic' *femme fatale*, in the tradition of Barbara Stanwyck in *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, 1944): a woman who is not only sexually magnetic but autonomously deadly.[18]

Filming took place between November 1954 and January 1955 and the *femme fatale* was played by an actress who was herself an outsider, the twenty-five-year-old former Miss Italy, Lucía Bosé, whom Bardem had seen in *Cronaca di un amore/Story of a Love Affair* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1950). Bosé was famous internationally for her starring role in Antonioni's film but she was not well known at the time in Spain and Bardem's producer, Manuel J. Goyanes, was initially sceptical.[19] He came around to the idea of the proposed Italian coproduction, however, and Italian actors Otello Tosso and Bruna Corrà took the roles of the husband, Miguel, and the young, blonde 'counter-*femme*', Matilde, whereas the well-known Argentinian actor, Alberto Closas, took the part of Juan, the disaffected university lecturer who is María-José's lover. I shall argue that the representation of the *femme fatale* in *Muerte de un ciclista* masks the wider political implications of the film's diegesis. As a result, the more that censors insisted on editing to emphasize the adulterous couple's guilt, condemnation and punishment, the more, inadvertently, they colluded with Bardem's ideological agenda, which was to expose, condemn and punish the Franco regime. I shall refer to Bardem's autobiography to illustrate the role of censorship in the making of the film, and examine the extent to which her costume mirrors that of the *femmes fatales* of US film noir, then examine the use of flamenco in the context of the Spanish Cold War alliance with the USA and, finally, examine the ideological role of the location of the adulterous affair to conclude that, while censorship subdues references to the *femme fatale*'s sexuality, it serves ironically to highlight her ideological function as the personification of the Franco regime.

In his autobiography, Bardem (1922–2002) describes his growing interest in film in the context of the Spanish Civil War. He particularly highlights the contrast between the freedom at his uncle's home in Republican Barcelona during the Civil War and the constraints of

14 A recent exception is Ann Davies, 'The Spanish *femme fatale* and the cinematic negotiation of Spanishness', *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2004), pp. 5–16.

15 A prototype *femme fatale* who sets a good wife on a path to poverty and prostitution from which she must be redeemed by her husband, played by Amelia Muñóz in *La aldea maldita/The Cursed Village* (Florián Rey, 1930).

16 The castrating mother as an allegory of the Franco Regime, played by Lola Gaos in *Furtivos/Poachers* (Jose Luis Borau, 1975). See Peter Evans, *Spanish Cinema: an Auterist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 115–27.

17 See Kinder, *Blood Cinema*, pp. 197–275, and Davies, 'The Spanish *femme*'.

18 For different interpretations of the *femme fatale*, see Angela Martin, 'Gilda didn't do any of those things you've been losing sleep over! The central woman of 40s films noirs', in Kaplan (ed.), *Women in Film Noir*, pp. 202–28.

19 While filming with Bardem, Bosé met leading Spanish bullfighter, Luis Miguel Dominguín. She gave up acting after her marriage, but her son, Miguel Bosé, has become one of Spain's most famous film and pop stars.

post-Civil War Madrid. In Barcelona he joined a Socialist Youth Group, read *Das Kapital* and the *Communist Party Manifesto*, and watched the great American film stars. Bardem has vivid memories of Greta Garbo in *Grand Hotel* (Edmund Goulding, 1932), Jean Harlow in *China Seas* (Tay Garnett, 1935) and Peggy Ashcroft in *The 39 Steps* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1935), while Joan Crawford was a particular idol for his cousin Conchita.[20] In post-Civil War Madrid, on the other hand, subservience to Hitler and Mussolini was briefly mandatory, until the end of World War II moderated public demonstrations of solidarity with Spain's now-disgraced fascist allies. Bardem had to join a Falangist Youth Group, and filmgoers were expected to stand and hold the fascist salute while the national anthems of Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain were played before the (now censored) film-viewing could begin.[21] Such dramatic ideological contrasts influenced his own cynical response to the propaganda of Nationalist Spain, and he joined the clandestine Spanish Communist Party in 1943.[22] This political affiliation also made Bardem wary of the Cold War developments in the early 1950s that would replace Spain's former fascist allies with the USA.

During the volatile political period leading up to the making of the film, there was a deliberate policy on the part of the regime to enforce onscreen representations of national identity.[23] So, when Bardem bought the rights to the story from Luis Fernández de Igoa, he was aware he would have problems with the censors.[24] The story was inspired by Tolstoy's 1899 novel *Resurrection*, and Bardem initially wanted his hero to sacrifice everything for love while the corrupt *femme fatale* would return to her husband.[25] An unnamed female friend pointed out that if he wanted to get the screenplay past the censors, 'divine retribution wouldn't do: the adulterous couple would have to die in front of the spectator' ['*nada de castigo divino ni gaitas; los adúlteros tenían que morir delante del espectador*'].[26] In Bardem's final screenplay, the wealthy *femme fatale*, María-José, knocks down the cyclist on an isolated road outside Madrid. As we have seen, she persuades her lover, Juan, a maths lecturer, to leave the man to die.[27] The couple then becomes increasingly estranged as the *femme fatale's* obsession with concealing her guilt conflicts with Juan's growing conviction that they should confess to the accident and to their affair. Finally, to save her reputation, the *femme fatale* runs Juan over, then crashes her car through the side of a bridge, swerving to avoid another cyclist. She dies suspended upside down from the wreckage of the car.[28]

The film was shown uncensored at the Cannes Film Festival, at which it was awarded the Critics' Prize. [29] Bardem returned to Spain almost immediately to present his now iconic paper at the Salamanca Film Week, in which he described the Spanish film industry as 'politically ineffective, socially false, intellectually abject, aesthetically nonexistent and commercially crippled' ['*Políticamente, ineficaz. Socialmente, falso. Intelectualmente, ínfimo. Estéticamente, nulo. Industrialmente, raquítico*'].[30] If this was Bardem's condemnatory rhetoric, then *Muerte*

20 Bardem, *Y todavía sigue*, pp. 108–9. See Wright, 'Dropping the mask', p. 419 for detail on cautionary regime tales for female film viewers in which particular scepticism was reserved for 'films with Joan Crawford, which encourage young women to have independent lives'.

21 Bardem, *Y todavía sigue*, p. 97.

22 Ibid., p. 130.

23 See Nuria Triana-Toribio, *Spanish National Cinema* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2003), p. 51.

24 Bardem, *Y todavía sigue*, p. 203.

25 Bardem cites Tolstoy as the source, but he may also have seen one of the various film versions made from 1909 onwards. Ibid., pp. 203–4.

26 Ibid.

27 Bardem worked as a maths tutor and was himself forced off the road in 1950 by a large American car that failed to stop. Ibid., p. 133.

28 For more details, see Jo Evans, 'Pudovkin and the censors', *Hispanic Research Journal*, vol. 8, no. 3 (2007), pp. 253–65; Kinder, *Blood Cinema*, pp. 73–86; Virginia Higginbotham, *Spanish Film under Franco* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1988), pp. 34–6.

29 Bardem was a member of the International Jury, so the film was not entered in the official section. The enthusiastic response was not unanimous. Truffaut called Bardem a 'plagiarising Stalinist'. Bardem, *Y todavía sigue*, p. 274.

30 Ibid., p. 141. Translation in Peter Besas, *Behind the Spanish Lens: Spanish Cinema Under Fascism and Democracy* (Denver, CO: Arden Press, 1985), p. 40. Bardem suggests, ironically, that this oft-quoted phrase serve as a verbal epitaph when his ashes are thrown out to sea. Bardem, *Y todavía sigue*, p. 142.

de un ciclista, screened for the only time uncensored in Spain that evening, represented the solution. His euphoria was shortlived, however, because the censors responded harshly.[31] It was the second clandestine meeting between the lovers that gave particular offence, although the censor would not explain exactly how it should be changed, offering Bardem only the cryptic statement: 'You'll see' ['*Ustedes verán*'].[32] Bardem re-edited and redubbed sequences he guessed to be offensive, but this version was also rejected with a specific recommendation this time that the religious censor wanted a quote from Saint Augustine inserted, 'predicting a terrible end for the unrepentant sinners' ['*el censor eclesiástico pretendía que en el diálogo se introdujese una cita de San Agustín, en la que se augura un final horrible para los pecadores no arrepentidos*'].[33] Bardem's description of this battle with the censors explains the extraordinary shift in Juan's mood during the redubbed version of the lovers' second meeting, as well as his own condemnation of censorship in Spain as a process that was 'absolutely, and viciously, sadomasochistic' ['*absoluta y viciosamente sadomasoquista*'].[34]

Bardem's film was not unique in Spain at the time for its representation of a less-than-submissive female who would be condemned for insubordination.[35] What makes it interesting is the extent of its debt to US noir in the context of Bardem's communist antipathy to the Spain–USA Cold War alliance. There is substantial use of noir tropes: alienating urban exteriors that threaten to disrupt the domestic interiors; lies and blackmail; romance and melodrama; the sacrificial mother and the good woman who counterbalances the immoral *femme fatale*. Since the *femme fatale* became the object of sustained critical inquiry in the 1970s, emphasis has been placed on the extent to which she functions as masquerade, with particular attention paid to fetishizing shots of her legs and high heels.[36] This trope was originally a sexual metonym for the more modest 1940s, but it has embraced its full fetishistic potential in the more liberal political context of neonoir, attracting diverse critical interpretation, from psychoanalytical approaches that link the portrayal of the *femme fatale* negatively to fetishism and male anxiety, to revisions that privilege the potential pleasure for the spectator in her connotations of power and control.[37] This film does not fetishize the *femme fatale's* legs or shoes, which only appear in long-shot, and yet in every other respect her costume adheres to the dress codes of the US *femme fatale*. In the following section, I argue that Bardem's Spanish *femme fatale*'s white gloves replace the fetishizing function of the high-heeled shoe in a way that has particular political resonance for the Franco regime.

Bosé's outfits were limited by budget, but they conform to Stella Bruzzi's description of the traditional *femme fatale* wardrobe:

> The symbolic iconography of the classic *femme fatale* is a limited, clearly demarcated register of clothes, based on the contrast of light and dark (in keeping with the chiaroscuro *mise-en-scène* but also

31 The student demonstration Bardem describes as 'my own little Odessa Steps' was brutally cut, leaving viewers (according to Bardem) wondering what on earth they were demonstrating about. Ibid., p. 209.

32 Ibid., p. 210.

33 Ibid.

34 Bardem claims he became so frustrated with the lack of clarity that he wrote thirteen different revisions, presented them all to Timmerman (the subdirector general of film), and made him choose. Ibid., p. 210.

35 See Daniel Kowalsky, 'Rated S: softcore pornography and the Spanish transition to democracy, 1977-82', in Antonio Lázaro Reboll and Andrew Willis (eds), *Spanish Popular Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 188–208, p. 190.

36 There is not space here to do justice to the bibliography on the *femme fatale*, but see Kaplan's introduction to her revised edition of *Women in Film Noir* for an excellent summary.

37 See Bruzzi's discussion of changing critical attitudes to the *femme fatale* in *Undressing Cinema*, pp. 134–9.

> indicative of duplicity) ... and the insertion of distinctive, often anachronistic garments or accessories. The most insistent anachronism is the use of pale clothes ... a clear example of inverse symbolism. More interesting is the occasional use of intrusive, significant detail such as the nun-like headwear added to the already stylised costumes for the final, fatal appearances of Cora at the end of *Postman* and Kathie in *Out of the Past*.[38]

38 Ibid., pp. 126–7.

Muerte presents viewers with a collage of these wardrobe tropes within the first half-hour. María-José appears at the race track wearing a brilliantly white, short fur jacket. Its whiteness conforms with Bruzzi's description of the way in which pale clothes function as a kind of 'inverse symbolism': in this case the white jacket signals metaphorically María-José's desire to 'whitewash' her involvement in the cyclist's death. For her meetings with Juan at the circus and with Rafa at the art gallery, respectively, she wears severe dark jackets. The second is more tightly buttoned up at the neck, suggesting a more defensive stance for this meeting with her potential blackmailer. For the lovers' clandestine meetings outside Madrid, she wears paler, more demure outfits that will be covered up by the long dark fur she wears for the exterior sequence in which she kills Juan.

In addition to these, a particular outfit deserves closer attention with regard to the ideological implications of Bardem's *femme fatale*: the dark dress with white spots, usually worn with white gloves, that appears in the NO-DO newsreel Juan watches in a cinema,[39] at the society wedding sequence, and in the photograph her husband smashes (figure 5). This outfit is particularly interesting for its relevance to sequences highlighting the *femme fatale*'s duplicity, as well as for the way the gloves (*de rigueur* for women in the 1950s) take on reverse metaphorical connotations that are extremely transgressive in the light of María-José's role as a woman masquerading as the 'good', *Sección Femenina* wife and society hostess firmly ensconced within the regime's social elite.[40]

39 The NO-DO (*Noticiarios y Documentales Cinematográficos*), introduced in December 1942, were government-censored newsreels devoted to the 'success' of the Franco regime that were broadcast at all screenings in all Spanish cinemas.

40 The *Sección Femenina* was founded in 1934 and led by Pilar Primo de Rivera (1902–91), daughter of former dictator, Miguel, and sister of the founder of the Falangist Party, José Antonio. For more on its strictly gender-segregated approach to etiquette and morality, see Martín Gaite, *Usos amorosos*.

Chronologically, the dress first appears ten minutes into the film, on the NO-DO newsreel Juan is watching in a cinema. Juan is distracted from a speech given on the newsreel by his despised brother-in-law, Jorge, by the sight of María-José, smiling and handing around a tray for donations (figure 6). This *mise-en-abîme* of his lover on a government-condoned newsreel as the personification of Spain's charitable elite emphasizes the physical, emotional and social distance between the lovers. Juan, on the other hand, is a disaffected lecturer who owes his job to the connections provided by the verbose brother-in-law who has just featured on the same newsreel. This framing of the *femme fatale* for the public consumption of the cinemagoing masses is paralleled with the reappearance of this dress in the photograph (this time on an image for private consumption representing her role as a wife) that her husband will smash when she fails to return in time for their flight (figure 5). Its framing in both sequences as a form of *mise-en-abîme* highlights the 'Russian-doll' effect of the layers of masquerade that distance her from

Fig. 5.

her husband and her lover and that prefigure her assumption, at the film's *dénouement*, of the murderous *femme fatale* role.

The same outfit is worn at a society wedding sequence, cross-cut with Juan's visit to the dead cyclist's home in the suburban slums of Madrid. During the first part of this sequence there is verbal allusion to the *femme fatale*'s capacity for masquerade in the mention of her wedding veil during the flirtatious small talk she attempts to initiate with her husband. María-José says how lovely it was to hear the wedding vows, to which Miguel replies, sardonically, that they made the same vows at their own wedding, implying that wedding vows do not necessarily prefigure a life of wedded bliss. The subtext of María-José's answer then provides a wonderfully deadpan and ironic indictment of her attitude to her marriage when she says, using the same flirtatious tone, that she cannot really remember making her own vows because she was too busy adjusting her veil ['*me tiraba un poco el velo*'].[41]

41 For more on the symbolic function of the veil, see Doane, *Femmes Fatales*, pp. 44–75.

As the wedding party progresses, María-José is called to the phone. Juan is ringing with the good news that the police have no way of tracing the car involved in the cyclist's death. This is a point of narrative transition where, as the official inquiry stalls, Rafa (the sinister piano player of the opening montage), takes over as María-José's potential nemesis. The mise-en-scene of this phone call with Juan reduces her outfit to its metonymical white gloves in a carefully composed, deep-focus shot that includes the reflection, in a large mirror, of Rafa talking to Miguel in the background.

Fig. 6.

Fig. 7.

Again, María-José tells Juan she is afraid, this time, of Rafa. She remains inscrutable to the viewer, largely hidden behind the chair next to the phone, but she emerges from behind the chair to declare herself to Juan (and to the viewer) to be vulnerable and frightened. The editing of this shot (figure 7) with subsequent shots (figures 8 and 9) detailing the careful precision with which she replaces the handset of her white-gloved hand, holding a cigarette, and placed with similar precision on the arm-rest, suggests that she is less vulnerable than she would like Juan to think and that she may have an altogether more calculating agenda.

The white gloves reappear during her masquerade at the church that confirms their sartorial role as a metonym for her own 'dirty hands',

Fig. 8.

Fig. 9.

Fig. 10.

allegorical of her calculated self-interest. This sequence also links her transgressively with her Catholic namesake, the Immaculate Maria (the words *la María Inmaculada* appear on a closeup, insert shot of one of the collection boxes). During this sequence, she metaphorically 'washes her hands' of the cyclist's death with the words 'it's all been so dreadful' ['*ha sido todo tan horrible*']. After making this inappropriate understatement about the death of a working-class man with a family to support, she passes money (from her white-gloved hands) first of all to Juan, as an anonymous donation to be given to the cyclist's widow, then, as she exits, she transfers banknotes to every collection box she passes on her way out of the church (figure 10).

Bardem's *femme fatale*'s costumes conform precisely to Bruzzi's classification of the 'fatal' female wardrobe. The absence of the more common noir shoe fetish means privilege is given to the distancing white gloves over the 'come hither' high heels. The way that the white gloves are foregrounded in this profoundly transgressive church sequence suggests that they may increasingly be read as a reverse metaphor for the 'dirty hands' of the regime with which she is so clearly associated. Framing has already linked her with official regime propaganda by highlighting her performance on the NO-DO newsreel. She remains in the corridor outside the main body of the Church for the sequence we have just examined (figure 11). Nonetheless, as if to confirm the link previously made with regime proganda, the mise-en-scene of her

Fig. 11.

'charitable donations' and demure churchgoing attire have connotations that inevitably link her virtuous masquerade with the image of the ideal Catholic wife so actively promoted by the *Sección Femenina*.

If the framing of Lucía Bosé's *femme fatale* and the metonymical implications of her white gloves link her transgressively with the 'dirty hands' of the regime, the wider film diegesis suggests, equally transgressively, that the 'dangerous liaison' in this narrative is not the relationship between lover and adulterous wife, but the 'legitimate' coupling of husband and wife. The sardonic comment Miguel makes about wedding vows and María-José's comment about adjusting her veil, in combination with the exaggerated focus, in the establishing montage, on the closeup of their kiss, establish their marriage to be little more than a cynical public masquerade. This is reinforced in a climactic sequence halfway through the film. Whereas the mise-en-scene discussed above engaged with the conventions of the government-condoned newsreel, in this sequence it connects with the tradition of the government-condoned *folklórica*.

In Spain, the filmic role that might under a more liberal political regime have gone to the *femme fatale*, was usurped by the popular icon of the idealized *folklórica*. Her association with official forms of public entertainment influenced the negative responses of opposition directors such as Bardem.[42] Prosper Mérimée's prototype *femme fatale/folklórica* was herself an outsider (a gypsy in a relationship with a Basque), and the 'Carmen' image popularly portrayed by stars such as Lola Flores was appropriated by the regime to substitute a cohesive, though fictitious, onscreen national identity for the regional and racial identities it was so eager to repress, as well as to sell Spain to an international market.[43] This is the tradition Rafa sums up in the film as providing a bit of '*olé, olé*' to entertain the Americans.

Although as noted, there are no fetishizing shots of the *femme fatale*'s legs and high heels in this film, there are shots of the legs and high-heeled shoes of the female flamenco dancer hired to entertain the Americans (figures 12–14 illustrate the closeup montage of the dance sequence, although they cannot do justice to the sound, speed and sheer power of the actual movement).[44] The insertion of the *femme folklórica* at this climactic point almost exactly halfway through the film is ideologically motivated. During the postdinner entertainment provided by the flamenco dancers, a silent, interpersonal coup takes place: all the relevant players (María-José, her lover Juan, her husband Miguel and her potential blackmailer Rafa) are sitting at the same table watching the dance. Although their conversation cannot be heard above the sound of the flamenco, the viewer understands that Rafa has drunkenly revealed the affair to Miguel. Miguel, however, will silence Rafa to protect his reputation, indicating that he does not consider his own virtue to be compromised by his wife's actions as long as her public masquerade remains intact. At this point in the film, María-José will transfer her allegiance from Juan back to her more powerful husband Miguel, in order not to lose her money and her social status.

42 For a more positive analysis, see Eva Woods, 'Performance in theory and practice: the *folklórica* as the internal other in *María de la O* and *Morena Clara*', in George Cabello Castelet, Jaume Martí-Olivella and Guy Wood (eds), *Cine-Lit III: Essays on Hispanic Film and Fiction*, (Portland, OR: Oregon State University, 1997), pp. 48–60.

43 The filmic *folklorica* was distinguished from Bizet's *Carmen (de Burgos)* by titles such as *Carmen, la de Triana* (1938) and *Carmen, la de Ronda* (1959). *Carmen, la de Triana* was the inspiration for the Penélope Cruz vehicle *La niña de tus ojos/The Girl of Your Dreams* (Fernando Trueba 1998).

44 For more on this sequence, see Kinder, *Blood Cinema*, pp. 82–3.

Fig. 12.

The early stages of this symbolic coup are entirely silenced by the sound of flamenco. Mise-en-scene allows the dancers a certain autonomy, despite the overtly fake setting of the dance (a reconstruction for the benefit of the Americans of a 'typical' Spanish bar with the small tables and murals). Montage also reaffirms the potentially disruptive physical and emotional drama of their performance. Closeups of clapping hands, stamping feet, haughty facial expressions and flashing flamenco skirts (figures 12-14) are inserted into a collage of increasingly close shots of the main players' faces, as Rafa passes on information drowned out by the noise of the dance (figures 15 and16).

The fact that this dangerous personal/political manoeuvring between the blackmailer Rafa, María-José and her husband is silenced by the

Fig. 13.

Fig. 14.

Fig. 15.

noise of the dancers has metaphorical implications suggestive of the manipulation of the *folklórica* by the Franco regime. The regime attempted to disguise Spain's problems behind an idealized, sanitized image of social harmony distributed via the NO-DO newsreels and the film industry to Spaniards and foreign consumers alike. In other words, it manipulated the kind of entertainment Rafa calls a bit of *olé, olé*, metaphorically to drown out dissent in a storm of music, dance and clapping.[45] Thanks to the noise, the American guests appear oblivious to the potentially fatal events unfolding around them just as the American Cold War pursuit of a financial and defensive alliance with Spain appeared oblivious to the murderous reputation of the Franco regime. The presence of the dancers at this narrative climax acts as a chorus to the (silent) revelation by Bardem's film that the upper echelons of Spanish society are corrupted by wealth and greed, and that the truth will be censored (in the film and in the Spanish state) to maintain the illusion of Spanish *honor* and charitable Catholic morality.

If the mise-en-scene of the *femme fatale* links her to the corruption at the heart of the Franco regime (via her metonymical white gloves, her role in the NO-DO newsreel, and her relationship to Spain's morally corrupt social elite), the location of her meetings with Juan performs a similar function. The hotel at which they meet is on an isolated country road, and for Spanish opposition filmmakers roads such as these would become a geographical metonym for the insularity that post-Civil War

45 This is the image of Spain served up for foreign consumption that Luis Berlanga exploits to such comic effect in *Bienvenido, Mr Marshall!/ Welcome, Mr Marshall!* (1953).

Fig. 16.

Fig. 17.

regime propaganda tried to package as evidence of Spain's proud self-sufficiency.[46] The religious censor mentioned earlier had serious reservations about the second meeting between the lovers at the *hostal* outside Madrid, and imposed the introduction of the quotation from Saint Augustine that makes such an incongruous shift in Juan's dialogue. The location, however, was not singled out as a focus for concern, despite the fact that its implications for Bardem's ideological subtext are significant. Diverging from the classic noir narrative, Bardem's film is not concerned with how the adulterous couple meet. We learn from their dialogue at the *hostal* that they were engaged before the war but that María-José left Juan, while he was away fighting in the trenches, for the wealthier and

46 Similarly isolated country roads recur in films now regarded as iconic opposition texts, such as Berlanga's *Bienvenido, Mr Marshall!* and Víctor Erice's *El espíritu de la colmena/ The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973).

Fig. 18.

Fig. 19.

better-connected Miguel. What is important to Bardem are the political and ideological implications of her betrayal and of the geography of their clandestine encounters. During the second meeting that so preoccupied the religious censor, interior shots of María-José and Juan at the *hostal* are cross-cut with interior shots of Juan's mother's sitting room. Juan has given Matilde a letter announcing his resignation from his job at the university and she is discussing his possible motives with Juan's mother. Matilde tells her that Juan spoke of 'something bad he once did' ['*algo malo que hizo una vez*']. This amplification of the timeframe from the specific (the accident and death of the cyclist) to the generic allows for wider political interpretation of the symbolic role of the cyclist's death in relation to the deaths of republicans during and after the Civil War. Melodramatic tension builds up in the cross-cutting and the dialogue to the point where it becomes difficult to ignore the fact that the crime of leaving the cyclist to die has taken on far wider symbolic significance.

Cross-cutting between these locations reaches its most melodramatic point when Juan's mother tells Matilde that life has separated her from her son. She looks up and intones the various stages of the socialization process, both prior to the Civil War and now imposed by the regime that has estranged him from her. She recites: 'first communion, school, military service, politics, war, death' ['*la primera comunión, el instituto, el servicio militar, la política, la guerra, la muerte*'].[47] Her final words ('war, death') bridge a jump-cut to María-José striding into and out of the frame (figures 17–19).

This melodramatic editing indicates María-José's evolution from duplicitous society hostess to murderous *femme fatale* and clarifies her metaphorical role as the personification of the regime that Juan's mother has just, albeit unconsciously, implicated in her son's fate.[48] Juan stands, pointing towards the spot where the cyclist died and where he once fought in the Civil War trenches (figure 20).

He declares himself more determined than ever 'to live' (that is, to live honestly, as a result of confessing to his part in the cyclist's death and to his relationship with María-José), but his next gesture is diegetically illogical. He should walk over to the car, as María-José has just done, but he remains standing, as if in a state of grace,[49] where the cyclist was left by them to die 'because he was in the way' ['*porque estorbaba*']. Then he beckons at María-José to drive towards him. This gesture (which he repeats) almost invites her to accelerate towards him and run him over, and it is only coherent if interpreted as a wider symbolic and metaphorical gesture, demonstrating that the penalty for speaking out in Franco's Spain is death. Juan's melancholic but ecstatic fantasy of confessionary absolution is, by this stage in the narrative, clearly linked to his wider disaffection with the Nationalists. His framing in this sequence indicates guilt not only for his role in the cyclist's death but also for his part in a military coup that has put in power a regime that now controls Spain through censorship and reprisals.[50]

47 This sequence is echoed in the grandmother's closing speech of Carlos Saura's Transition comedy, *Mamá cumple cien años*/*Mama Turns 100* (1979).

48 The editing also recalls Doane's comment that the *femme fatale* 'is not the subject of power but its *carrier*', in *Femmes Fatales*, p. 2.

49 See Mark Nicolls, 'Male melancholia and Martin Scorsese's *The Age of Innocence*', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 50, no. 1 (2004), pp. 25–35, p. 26.

50 Juan's melancholia, highlighted in brooding closeups and in his specialism (geometry), reminiscent of Albrecht Dürer's Melancholia, also brings to mind Doane's point that the *femme fatale* may function as an onscreen projection of masculine fear and anxiety. Doane, *Femmes Fatales*, p. 2.

Fig. 20.

María-José makes sure that Juan is dead, then attempts to drive back to Madrid in time to leave the country with her husband. In a diegetic full circle, she is herself killed when she crashes over a bridge after swerving to avoid another cyclist. The viewer's last sight of her is from the second, unharmed, cyclist's point of view as he shines his bicycle lamp over the bridge onto her face where she hangs upside down from the wreckage of the car. Editing and cinematography accentuate her hanging. There are three shots of her face in this position, edited in increasing closeup, each one more brightly lit by the cyclist's lamp (figure 21). These are then followed by a medium-shot of the rest of her body as the cyclist turns, considers for a moment, then goes for help. Bardem was aware that his version of the screenplay must include the deaths of both lovers. However, this visual repetition (the three increasingly close shots of María-José's inverted face) exaggerates the demands of censorship to the extent that it is difficult *not* to read into Bardem's (counter)-insistence on this diegetically superfluous montage, a reference to Mussolini's executed mistress Carla Petacci, hanging upside down in the Piazzale Loreto next to her lover, Franco's former ally, in 1945.

Reflecting on his friend's comment that divine retribution would not be sufficient punishment for the lovers ['*nada de castigo divino ni gaitas*'], Bardem notes wryly that she was quite right, as the censors, and in particular the Church representative who had the final veto, had more faith in their own terrestrial executions than in Divine Retribution ['t*enía*

Fig. 21.

toda la razón: la censura franquista de guiones, en la que el representante de la Iglesia católica apostólica y romana tenía derecho de veto, desconfiaba totalmente de la justicia divina. Muerte física para los adúlteros'].[51] He remained pessimistic about the effects of censorship on the aesthetic coherence of this film, [52] as well as on Spanish film in general ['*sin libertad no se puede hacer cine*'].[53] However, in spite of the censors, his appropriation of the classic *femme fatale* role retains much of its ideological impact. Although she is, superficially, a straightforward pastiche of the classic American *femme fatale*, both editing and censorship define the role she plays in the indictment of the Franco regime and its wealthy, US-financed, upper-class elite. Her assumption of her fatal autonomy at the point where her role as the personification of the Franco regime is made most overt by the verbal bridge ('war, death'), combined with the ideological role of the location at which this deadly assumption occurs, ensures that the political implications remain clear.[54] Marsha Kinder concludes that 'Juan moves from right to left and is martyred, not by the political cause he betrays, but (like a *noir* hero) by the *femme fatale* he loves and by the class they both represent'.[55] I would argue, however, that the *femme fatale* personifies that political class, while Juan comes to personify the 'silenced' victims of postwar retribution and censorship. I would also argue that the two characters do not represent the same class. Juan is alienated from María-José's Nationalist elite, not only financially and professionally, but also by the increasing political disaffection that is prefigured in the subtext of a comment he makes to his mother during their very first dialogue: 'the good brothers are dead' ['*los hermanos buenos están muertos*']. Returning to Doane's statement cited earlier that the *femme fatale* personifies 'a secret, something which must be aggressively revealed, unmasked, discovered',[56] Bardem's representation of this Spanish *femme fatale* conforms to the demands of historical context and censorship in a way that allows her mise-en-scene to indicate that the secret in this film is not only that of her personal moral guilt, but also of the political moral guilt of the National Catholic regime. *Muerte de un ciclista* reworks what might have remained a potentially straightforward pastiche of the American *femme fatale* into a transgressive political statement – film noir providing the sex-related smokescreen that focused the religious censor's gaze on the dangerous liaison with the *femme fatale*, and mise-en-scene manipulating censorship into exposing the censors.

My thanks to Claire Lindsay, Núria Triana-Toribio, Ann Davies, and Marie and David Evans for comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

51 Bardem, *Y todavía sigue*, pp. 203–4.
52 Ibid., p. 210.
53 Ibid., p. 333.
54 Bardem cites Christopher Caudwell, the British writer who died fighting with the International Brigades during the battle of Jarama in February 1937, as a role model. Ibid., p. 102.
55 Kinder, *Blood Cinema*, p. 85.
56 Doane, *Femmes Fatales*, p. 1

Returning to actuality: *fûkeiron* and the landscape film

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Has Japan ever produced a body of critical writings that deserves to be called 'theory'? The fields of Japanese film studies and film studies in general have been beset by a presumption that goes back to the inaugural work of Noël Burch, who famously claimed that 'the very notion of theory is alien to Japan; it is considered a property of Europe and the West'.[1] This tenet has been questioned in the past, yet its ghost lingers on. My essay attempts to exorcize this ghost by exploring a particular film discourse known as *fûkeiron* (the theory of landscape) that emerged at the end of the 1960s in Japan. Not only does this discourse demonstrate that there was indeed theoretical writing in Japan, it also shows the importance of this theoretical writing for filmmaking practice at the time. Finally, this writing and filmmaking practice is itself directed as a critique of the then dominant model of leftist documentary filmmaking, a critique that has yet to be given its due attention.

As an example of radical documentary film practice, one may cite Fernando Solanas's and Octavio Getino's 1968 film manifesto *La Hora de los Hornos/The Hour of the Furnaces*. Here we have the sound of machine-gun fire in perfect synch with a rapid montage of fashion models, Batman, cowboys and bleeding Vietnamese children; this famous sequence emblematizes the political avant-garde notion of 'film as a weapon', a militant ideal engraved deeply in the history of cinema.[2] To quote Solanas and Getino, 'The camera is the inexhaustible expropriator of image-weapons; the projector, a gun that can shoot 24 frames per second'.[3] Of course, this vision of film activism likened to armed resistance is not limited to Argentina, but was common to a wide range of militant leftist filmmaking of the 1960s.

1 Noël Burch, *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in the Japanese Cinema*, in Annette Michelson (ed.), (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), p. 13.

2 Thomas Waugh, 'Beyond *vérité*: Emile de Antonio and the new documentary of the seventies', in Bill Nichols (ed.), *Movies and Methods: an Anthology*, Vol. II (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 233–58.

3 Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, 'Towards a third cinema', in Simon Field and Peter Sainsbury (eds), *Third World Cinema* (London: Afterimage Publishing, 1971), p. 29.

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doi:10.1093/screen/hjm034

For instance, 1968 also saw Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin form a militant film collective, the Dziga-Vertov group, as a critical response to the insurrection of May 1968. In Japan, documentary filmmaking exemplified in the work of Ogawa Shinsuke and Tsuchimoto Noriaki came to the fore in response to an increasing demand to document and support intensifying student protests and other forms of political activism. Like Newsreel, the New Left documentary collective founded in New York in 1967, Ogawa and Tsuchimoto turned their camera onto students and workers behind the barricades. The most emblematic examples of such direct participation in political activism are perhaps Ogawa's *Gennin hôkoku: Handeda tôsô no kiroku/Report from Haneda* (1967) and Tsuchimoto's *Paruchizan zenshi/Prehistory of the Partisan Party* (1969).[4]

Yet at the height of such political upheaval and the spread of radical documentary filmmaking, another group of Japanese leftist filmmakers was travelling through Japan. They filmed the everyday scenes of more than thirty-three cities in order to trace the footsteps of nineteen-year-old Nagayama Norio, who was charged with four accounts of murder in 1969. The film is titled *Ryakushô: renzoku shasatsuma/A.K.A. Serial Killer* and is a clear antithesis to the Griersonian ideal of the documentary film famously defined as 'the creative treatment [or dramatization] of actuality'. Nothing dramatic happens or appears in *A.K.A. Serial Killer*; it endlessly and disjunctively strings together actuality footage of urban and rural landscapes from the tip of the northern island of Hokkaido to the southwestern cities of mainland Japan. Yet precisely because of its peculiar obsession with the eventless images of quotidian landscapes, *A.K.A. Serial Killer* stands apart from the militant documentary filmmaking of the time, which focused upon dramatic action and the faces of student protesters and workers engaged in political resistance.

A.K.A. Serial Killer is a collaboration of several filmmakers, one of whom is Adachi Masao, later to join the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The film has gained its legendary status within Japanese cinema history for various reasons, but primarily because of its proximity to the film discourse of *fûkeiron*, which also emerged at the end of 1960s. Although the film itself was not officially shown to the public until 1975, the handful of critics and filmmakers who had seen it engaged in heated debate over the film's focus on landscape.[5] Moreover, several of the *fûkeiron* critics such as Matsuda Masao pointed out the close affinity between *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and Oshima Nagisa's 1970 film *Tokyo sensô sengo hiwa: eiga de isho o nokoshiteitta otoko no monogatari/The Secret Story of the Post-Tokyo War: the Story of a Man Who Left His Will on Film*.

Made one year after *A.K.A. Serial Killer*, this black-and-white narrative film is dedicated to the failed revolutionary 'War of Tokyo'. In Oshima's view, the radical student movements that intensified during 1968 and 1969, and culminated in the occupation of Tokyo University and the antiwar demonstrations in Shinjuku, constituted a failed revolution. This revolutionary struggle 'at its peak, was dubbed the War of Tokyo by the

4 For a comprehensive account of the works of Ogawa and Tsuchimoto, see Mark Abé Nornes, 'The postwar documentary trace: groping in the dark', *Positions*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2002), pp. 39–78.

5 The film was never screened in the USA until recently, and the US premiering of the film by was made possible by the joint efforts of Japanese scholars, such as Hirasawa Gô who has been working on the theory of *fûkeiron*, as well as non-Japanese scholars, such as Mark Abé Nornes, Aaron Gerow and Harry Harootunian. In addition, what set off this revived interest in *A.K.A. Serial Killer* was, at least in part, the return of Adachi Masao to Japan from Lebanon in 2000.

Red Army Faction' and it ended 'in a mood of defeat'.[6] Importantly, this filmic requiem dedicated to the post-Tokyo War period includes a film-within-the-film, which presents a remarkable formal similarity to *A.K.A. Serial Killer*. This film-within-the-film of *The Secret Story* and the entire film of *A.K.A. Serial Killer* are characterized by the visual predominance of static long-shots of banal townscapes often devoid of human figures. Japanese critics who became involved in the discourse of *fûkeiron* thus called these two films *fûkei eiga*, or landscape films.[7]

While the main theorist of the *fûkeiron* was Matsuda, who was one of the crew members of *A.K.A. Serial Killer*, a former professional Marxist revolutionary and an editor of literary and film journals, other well-known figures contributed to its formation, such as Adachi, the filmmaker Hara Masataka (also known as Masato, co-scriptwriter for Oshima's *The Secret Story*), photographer Nakahira Takuma and other critics associated with journals such as *Provoke* (1968–69) and *Eiga Hihyô II/Film Criticism II* (1970–73).

It is also known that Sasaki Mamoru, co-scriptwriter for *The Secret Story*, was involved in the production of *A.K.A. Serial Killer*. However, the nexus between these two films that I want to foreground here does not involve the members of the crew but rather the form of the films. My argument is that in their exclusive focus on the quotidian landscapes of Japan at the end of the 1960s, *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and *The Secret Story* not only reconceptualize the militant ideal of 'film as a weapon', but also offer an implicit critique of the documentary film as a genre. Moreover, they do so by appropriating the preclassical cinematic genre of the *actuality film* (or *actualities*). To assess their implicit critique, however, requires an extended examination of the concurrent discourse of the *fûkeiron*, which will provide an indispensable theoretical framework for understanding why these particular films emerged at the end of the 1960s in Japan.

In the words of Matsuda, what these critics commonly shared was an 'obsessive propensity towards landscape'.[8] As I hope to demonstrate in this paper, their interests in the concept and the image of landscape point to their collective awareness of a particular historical conjuncture of political, cultural and economic transformations. Very schematically, we can identify at least three interlocking changes happening at the end of the 1960s in Japan: the waning of a centralized mode of political resistance (the masses versus the State); an increasing scepticism towards the centrality of the subject [*shutai*] among leftist filmmakers and activists; and Japan's economic shift from industrial to postindustrial consumer capitalism.

More concretely, I want to posit the hypothesis that the faltering of the centralized mode of thinking about political resistance and subjectivity led these Japanese leftist filmmakers to discover the problematic of landscape. In other words, the increasing interest in the semiotic functions of quotidian landscapes in Japanese cinema marks a crucial

6 Oshima Nagisa, 'How to die in the 1970s', director's commentary included on the DVD of *The Post-Tokyo War Confidential: the Story of A Man Who Left His Will on Film* (1970).

7 While the term 'landscape film' was initially used to describe just two films (*A.K.A. Serial Killer* and *The Secret Story*), it has been applied to other films such as Hara Masato's *Hatsukuni shirasumera mikoto* (1973) and Takamine Gô's *Okinawan Dream Show* (1971–74).

8 Matsuda Masao, 'Ûtopia no hango', *Fûkei no Shimetsu* (Tokyo: Tabata Shoten, 1971), p. 134.

transition from a centralized subjectivist mode of thinking about resistance – which is anchored in the revolutionary acts of the human agents – to a de-centralized analytic mode of investigating the immanent relations of power that are found within a historically specific social formation. To borrow the expression of Gilles Deleuze, the landscape understood in this sense is a 'diagram' of the microphysics of power.[9]

Among the classical images presented by the militant documentary films of the 1960s are those of police brutality, picketing workers, marching students; images, in other words, that convey a sense of eventfulness and human action. As Michael Renov writes in his discussion of early Newsreel, 'there was a perceived need for immediate coverage of events from a left perspective'.[10] Similarly, in a 1967 interview Ogawa speaks of a sense of urgency he felt in getting involved in the scenes of student activism:

> I had a gut-level fear that I was becoming apathetic towards politics while making PR films no matter what I said about them. ... And when I saw the struggle of student protesters at Meiji University, I felt a strong urge to do something about the reality presented there from my own [professional] position.[11]

This interview took place immediately after Ogawa finished the making of *Assatsu no mori/Forest of Pressure* (1967), an acclaimed documentary film about students at Takasaki City University of Economics. It is worth noting some of the critics' responses to the film in order to highlight the sense of urgency aimed at and conveyed by Ogawa's film. In a 1968 review of the film, for instance, Matsuda describes the sequence from *Forest of Pressure* in which student protesters violently clash with the antiriot police in front of the courthouse:

> A riot policeman reaches his hand forward with the intention of removing the white cloths masking the faces of the students. Even a piece of white cloth, here, can become a weapon. And when the documentarist gives up his camera and tries to guard the masked fighters – those student troopers – with his own body, this documentary promises to turn into a masterpiece in front of our eyes.[12]

To turn to more recent responses, a comment by Mark Abé Nornes expresses a similar appraisal:

> All of these films rejected the rhetoric of objective reportage used by the television news documentary to veil its alliance with the government and big business. Ogawa and Tsuchimoto's films documented the thrill of independence, of crossing barricade lines and taking sides. This bold move attracted the burgeoning student movement, making the filmmakers cultural heroes of the left.[13]

Contrary to this tradition, however, there are no such iconic, urgent images of historic events or heroic figures that would readily identify

9 Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1986), pp. 80–81.

10 Michael Renov, *The Subject of Documentary* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), p. 11.

11 Ogawa Shinsuke, 'Daigaku tôsô o toraeru me', in Yamane Sadao (ed.), *Eiga o toru: dokyumentarii no shifuku o motomete* (Tokyo: Satsuma shobô, 1993), p. 82.

12 Matsuda Masao, 'Ajitêshon no ne: Assatsu no mori san,' in *Bara to mumeisha* (Tokyo: Haga shoten, 1970), p. 215.

13 Nornes, 'The postwar documentary trace', p. 52.

A.K.A. Serial Killer as a militant documentary film. Although it is true that several long-shots of tanks and the feet of marching soldiers from the Self-Defence Forces appear briefly on screen, these are no more privileged than the neighbouring shots of anonymous boys delivering milk or newspapers. Unlike Solanas's and Getino's *La Hora de los Hornos*, no indictment of cultural imperialism and neocolonial capitalism is explicitly articulated. Unlike Newsreel's *Columbia Revolt* (1968) or Ogawa's *Report from Haneda* (1967), the film steers away from focusing on epoch-making events and towards the recording of the eventless everyday.

In the case of *The Secret Story*, the militant ideal of 'film as a weapon' is diegetically incorporated by the use of inserted documentary footage of student protests against the US occupation of Okinawa. Yet it is critically juxtaposed against the film-within-the-film, which contains nothing but several static long-shots of peaceful townscapes of residential areas within Tokyo. At one point in the film, the voiceovers of student activists loudly denounce this inserted film-within-the-film, which they interpret to be the testament of an unidentified member of their activist group who presumably committed suicide. These student characters complain that this film-within-the-film does not convey any clear political message or vision; it is a waste of time and money to document sporadic vehicle traffic around a guardrail or an underpass, or to document peaceful scenes of immobile rows of houses and television antennae. Their conclusion is that such generic scenes of urban life can be filmed 'anytime, anywhere'.

The actuality footages in this film-within-the-film are thus rejected for their lack of local and temporal specificity. These militant students do not see any need to document such nondramatic scenes precisely because, according to their political vision, documentary films are supposed to capture historic moments of specific struggles. And this is exactly what these characters do in filming student protests against the US occupation of Okinawa on 28 April 1969.

However, given the thematic and visual primacy of the film-within-the-film in *The Secret Story*, it would be a mistake simply to endorse the political point of view of the student activist characters. Rather, I want to argue that the film's main critique is inversely aimed at radical documentary filmmaking itself, which privileges epoch-making revolutionary events while focusing on the human actors. The revolutionary view of history, which privileges dramatic moments of rupture and change, is also called into question by the everyday temporality of eventless landscapes. *A.K.A. Serial Killer* enacts a similar critique by deliberately avoiding the narrative dramatization of Nagayama's crime. In contrast to the dated, localized and eventful space–time of documentary footage, what *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and the film-within-the-film of *The Secret Story* present, therefore, are decidedly fragmentary images showing an everyday life that is banal and devoid of

Fig. 1.
A.K.A. Serial Killer **(Adachi Masao, 1969). Picture courtesy Hirasawa Gō**

any chronological markers or local specificity. What, then, one may ask, is the political efficacy of making such films?

Despite being called 'landscape', *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and the film-within-the-film of *The Secret Story* present neither the pastoral nor sublime. Here it is banality that counts. But why emphasize the banality of everyday scenery? At one level, as I have noted already, the foregrounding of everydayness counteracts the revolutionary temporality that structures political documentary films of the 1960s. But there is another level of critique at work in these two 'landscape films', one which has to do with space. Before I go into the analysis of this spatial critique in the images of landscapes, a brief contextualization of the life of Nagayama – the inspiration for *A.K.A. Serial Killer* – is in order.

Nagayama (1949–97) was born into a poor working-class family in the northern island of Hokkaido. As he recounts later in his novelistic works, poverty forced his family to move around, preventing him from regularly attending school. In 1968 he stole a pistol from the US navy base in Yokosuka and killed two security guards and two taxi drivers. He was arrested and sentenced to death, but while in prison he learned to read, turned to political philosophy and began to write. In 1971 he published his first autobiographical novel, *Muchi no namida/Tears of Ignorance*, which became an instant bestseller, gaining enthusiastic support from left-leaning youth. Nagayama continued to publish novels from prison, sending his royalties to the families of his victims.

But more than anything, Nagayama became an icon of radical leftism and the agitating voice of the so-called lumpenproletariat, putting forward statements such as 'The bourgeoisie does not have the right to pass judgment on the proletariat'. In so doing, he laid his indictment at the feet of the capitalist state. When he wrote, for instance, 'At midnight on a certain day of a certain era/ a fool who knew neither

East nor West/declared war in solitude/against the Japanese capitalist State', Nagayama retrospectively positioned himself as the solitary rebel.[14] Consequently, numerous writers, filmmakers and intellectuals turned to Nagayama in order to speak for and about him, as if he were a symbolic nodal point of the political, economic and cultural strata of postwar Japan.

The filmmaker Shindô Kaneto (b.1912), for instance, turned the life of Nagayama into a sentimental narrative film, *Hadaka no jûkyûsai/Live Today, Die Tomorrow!*, in 1970. Unlike *A.K.A. Serial Killer*, *Live Today* focuses on Nagayama's social and familial relationships. It tells a heartrending story by articulating a chain of dramatic events propelled by the characters' actions. In contrast, *A.K.A. Serial Killer* refuses such a narrative impulse towards dramatic storytelling. In recalling the making of *A.K.A. Serial Killer*, filmmaker Adachi notes how they resisted the temptation to narrate Nagayama's life. Landscape, according to Adachi, emerged as an alternative way of organizing the film while they followed the migratory footsteps of Nagayama from one location to another:

> The impression that every city is just like the same city did not disappear. While I held my breath, stood still, and wondered where originated such stifling feeling in these cities, the landscapes in front of my eyes appeared as beautiful as postcards. Yet precisely because of their beauty, which was like that of picture postcards, I began realizing that this was the source of our suffocation. Perhaps everyone knows about this suffocation, yet it keeps spreading everyday while people walk through the city in order to survive. I felt that perhaps this was the enemy of Nagayama. Then, we thought we could turn these depriving landscapes into a method in order to interrogate landscapes, ourselves, as well as the images of Nagayama.[15]

I want to highlight a passage in which Adachi compares his impression of local scenery with his impression of picture postcards. His visual analogy between the cliched images of picture postcards and homogeneous local scenery is indeed translated into the formal style of *A.K.A. Serial Killer*, in which the majority of shots are composed in a manner comparable to the static views of picture postcards.

Adachi's reference to the cliched images of picture postcards thus sheds light on the question of the uniformity and banality of the images at the heart of these landscape films. However, Adachi also regards the uniform impression of the landscape that changes so little from one city to another as 'the enemy of Nagayama'. But what does it mean to say that the generic landscape is an enemy, a source of suffocation?

Interestingly, referencing Walter Benjamin, who argues that Eugène Atget photographed the deserted landscapes of nineteenth-century Paris as if they were deserted crime scenes, Matsuda discusses the making of *A.K.A. Serial Killer* in the essay titled 'City as Landscape' (1970) as follows: 'We filmed scenes of crime just like landscape'.[16] But, one might ask, which scenes are the crime scenes? Undoubtedly, Matsuda

14 Cited by Matsuda Masao in 'Misshitsu no teroru', in *Fûkei no shimetsu*, p. 238. My translation.

15 Adachi Masao, *Eiga/Kakumei* (Tokyo: Kawaide Shobô, 2003), p. 290. My translation.

16 Ibid. Hirai Gen at the Kinema Club IV conference (22-26 June 2005) also pointed out this intriguing passage in his analysis of Nagayama Norio through the framework of the historical disintegration of the welfare state.

would say all the scenes in *A.K.A. Serial Killer*; that is, all the landscapes. In noting that the only point of intersection between the journey taken by Nagayama and that of the filmmakers a few months later was the 'homogeneous landscape', Matsuda too draws our attention to the correlation between the uniformity of the landscapes of various cities and Nagayama's migratory footsteps through them.[17] In the essay titled 'My archipelago, my landscape', Matsuda puts forward another statement, which resonates well with Adachi's observation:

> When we tried to see another Japanese archipelago with visionary eyes, by following the footsteps of a member of the masses who grew up in the lower-class strata of society, and who had to form his own class position through constant vagrancy as his only state of being, surprisingly or not surprisingly, we ended up discovering a common element that cannot be called anything but *landscape*, which existed like the end points of a segment of a line.[18]

As Matsuda writes in another essay, the 'common elements' that repeatedly appear like equidistant points on the line of their journey are precisely the uniformity of homogeneous landscape.[19] It is important to note that Matsuda and Adachi both emphasize their awareness of such uniformity of landscapes at the profilmic level as well as the compositional level of effects produced by the camera.

Here it would be helpful briefly to cover what is generally meant by the term 'landscape' and to think through the correlation between the production of homogeneous landscapes and the structure of domination, in particular that of a class society, which underlies Adachi's and Matsuda's discussion of Nagayama. When people talk about landscape in general, it usually encompasses two different levels of organization of space: the first the physical space seen from a particular point of view; the second pertaining to the framed space of visual representations, whether painting, photography or cinema. In both cases, the emphasis is on an expansive space relatively devoid of human figures. Similarly, Japanese critics use the term *fûkei*, or landscape, in order to refer to the profilmic physical space as well as the representational space inside the screen.

It must also be added that the representational practice of landscape and landscaping of physical space have increasingly been theorized (since the 1980s) by cultural geographers and art historians through the frameworks of modern subjectivism, colonialism, market capitalism, urban development, and so on. For instance, Mitchell has argued that landscape at the physical or concrete material level already constitutes 'a medium of cultural expression'.[20] Mitchell writes:

> Landscape may be represented by painting, drawing, or engraving; by photography, film, and theatrical scenery; by writing, speech, and presumably even music and other 'sound images'. Before all these secondary representations, however, landscape is itself a physical and

17 Matsuda Masao, 'Fûkei to shite no toshi'. *Fûkei no shimetsu* (Tokyo: Tabata Shoten, 1971), p. 16. The essay was originally published in the journal *Gendai no me* (April 1970).

18 Matsuda Masao, 'Waga rettô, waga fûkei', in *Fûkei no shimetsu*, pp. 92–3.

19 Matsuda Masao, 'Fûkei no shimetsu no tame ni', in *Fûkei no shimetsu*, p. 280.

20 W.J.T. Mitchell, 'Imperial landscape', in Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and Power* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 14.

multisensory medium (earth, stone, vegetation, water, sky, sound and silence, light and darkness, etc) in which cultural meanings and values are encoded, whether they are *put* there by the physical transformation of a place in landscape gardening and architecture, or *found* in a place formed, as we say, 'by nature'.[21]

Mitchell thus expands the notion of landscape to include semiotic functions of physical space itself. Similarly, Denis Cosgrove defines landscape as *a way of seeing*.[22] Landscape as a way of seeing the external world, moreover, gave rise to a 'practical appropriation of space', which has taken such diverse modalities as urban planning, garden architecture and colonial expropriations of land. For Cosgrove, the dominant representational practices of landscape – be they painting or photography – are hence inseparable from the economic and social expansions of the urban property owners that emerged in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Europe.

Most importantly, many critics have argued that landscape needs to be understood as an ideology, as well as a technique of vision which has its basis in linear perspective. It is argued that the apparatus of the camera itself, with its built-in linear perspective, falls within the purview of the ideological construction of human vision that coincides with the rise of Renaissance humanism. This is a view corroborated by the apparatus theory of 1970s film studies, such as that of Jean-Louis Baudry.[23] When we turn to the specificities of Japan, however, we find that not only cinema but also the entire practice of European-style landscape painting and photography (along with philosophy) was imported in the late nineteenth century. Hence, for critics like Karatani Kôjin, the semiotic 'discovery of landscape', which entailed a perspectival inversion of the world, took place only in the nineteenth century, the era of Japan's intensive industrial and cultural modernization.[24]

Whether it is analyzed in the Euro-American context or the Japanese context, critics seem to agree upon one thing: landscape as an idea as well as a practice is inseparable from the emergence of the modern epistemic subject who, as Martin Heidegger has argued, sees the world as if it is a 'picture'.[25] 'The fundamental event of the modern age', writes Heidegger, 'is the conquest of the world as picture'.[26] However, what remains implicit in Heidegger and Karatani, both of whom are concerned with the epistemic ramifications rather than the specific political and economic implications of modernity, is the question of control over space tied to the expansions of modern state capitalism.

It is precisely the interdependence between the increasing control over territorial space and the consolidation of postwar democratic state capitalism that the critics of *fûkeiron* problematize. In other words, the central concern of *fûkeiron* (as articulated by Adachi and Matsuda in the above quotations) is neither the aesthetic production of picturesque scenery nor the metaphysical divide between subject and object, but rather the immanent relations of power that produce homogenized

21 Ibid.

22 Following the lead of John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1972), Denis Cosgrove writes: 'Landscape first emerged as a term, an idea or better still, *a way of seeing* the external world, in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. It was, and it remains, a visual term, one that arose initially out of renaissance humanism and its particular concepts and constructs of space'. Denis Cosgrove, 'Prospect, perspective and the evolution of the landscape idea', *Transactions of the Institute of the British Geographers*, New Series, vol. 10, no. 1 (1985), p. 46.

23 Jean-Louis Baudry, 'Ideological effects of the basic cinematographic apparatus', in Philip Rosen (ed.), *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 286–98.

24 To quote Karatani, 'The philosophical standpoint that distinguishes between subject and object came into existence within what I refer to as "landscape". Rather than existing prior to landscape, subject and object emerge from within it'. Karatani Kôjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, trans. Brett de Bary (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 34.

25 Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 132.

26 Ibid., p. 134.

landscapes. In their view, the very uniformity of the landscape of rural and urban cities throughout Japan corresponds to the serial mass production and standardization of commodities, which, in turn, reproduce unskilled manual labourers like Nagayama Norio. Thus, 'the enemy of Nagayama' of which Adachi speaks is not simply the homogenized landscape itself, but rather the invisible relations of power that produce such homogenized landscapes.

Given the topographical interest of these critics and filmmakers in the politics of landscape, it is worth examining closely how Matsuda turns to the cartographic practice of mapping in order to describe the process of tracing the migratory footsteps of Nagayama while filming *A.K.A. Serial Killer*. For instance, Matsuda begins his essay, 'My archipelago, my landscape', with some reflections upon cartography:

> It is well known that the atlas made in Japan and the atlases made abroad, let's say in London, have different compositions. That is, Japan is placed at the centre in the former, and England in the latter. As a result, the Pacific Ocean spreads vastly, with North and South Americas being placed on the right side and Africa on the left in the former atlas, while South America and Africa closely face one another across the Atlantic Ocean in the latter atlas. Of course the Pacific Ocean gets divided in half, and if you look for Japan it barely retains its trace, like a stretched scar at the top corner on the right. As I write this, it may appear commonsensical and hence not move you at all, but, by way of experiment, I suggest actually buying two maps and placing them on both sides of the wall for comparison. When placed between two maps, we would actually feel the transformation of our own *worldview*. In my case, when a printing gets shifted slightly, things whose existence I took for granted are transformed into a source of tremendous shock that even causes a sensation of nausea.[27]

27 Matsuda Masao, 'Waga rettô, waga fûkei', p. 91. My translation, emphasis in original.

Of particular interest here is Matsuda's recognition that the cartographic practices of different nation-states reflect different 'worldviews' [*sekaikan*]. The innocuous surface of a page from an atlas might be read as a symbolic mapping of different geopolitical imaginations at work.

An especially important passage, which leads Matsuda's thinking from cartography to the making of the film *A.K.A. Serial Killer*, appears immediately afterwards. In noting how Africa and South America show up like severed 'Siamese twins' in the atlas made in London, Matsuda shifts his cartographic meditation from the comparison between Japan and England to the formation of the 'Third World'. He writes: 'The innocuous existence of the map made in London triggered me to think the meaning of the 'Third World' as *another world*. I felt that the entire history of the ones who made the map and the ones who were made into the map crystallized there'.[28] In other words, Matsuda pays attention to the peripheral positioning of both Africa and South America in the maps made in two former imperial nation-states: Japan and England. In so

28 Ibid., p. 92. Emphasis in original.

doing, he self-reflexively links his shock at seeing Japan marginalized in the map made by British cartographers to an astute observation about the equally marginalizing attitude of Japanese cartographers towards Africa and South America (which are placed at both edges of the map). Matsuda thus moves away from the dualistic comparative schema of Japan versus the West towards a tertiary schema in order to highlight the interrelation between the cartographic imagination and the politico-economic constitution of the 'Third World'.

Matsuda's evocation of the 'Third World' in this essay is not surprising, given his political interest in anarchism and anticolonialism, particularly the works of writers such as Louis Auguste Blanqui, Jules Régis Debray, Che Guevara and Frantz Fanon.[29] But what I want to emphasize here is how Matsuda uses the conceptual framework of cartography to discuss the culturally and historically conditioned ways of seeing the world (worldview) and especially the ways of seeing that are directly linked to the colonial and imperial relations of power. Although an in-depth analysis of Matsuda's conceptualization of the 'Third World' is outside the scope of this essay, we can at least grasp from this brief passage how Matsuda introduces the notion of the 'Third World' in order to offer a global perspective on the disenfranchised lumpenproletariat that forms a symbolic 'Third World' within Japan. Nagayama's plight (to which he is clearly sympathetic, though this sympathy itself may deserve criticism) is thus framed against the worldwide division between those who dominate and those who are dominated. Yet, how does this understanding relate to the film *A.K.A. Serial Killer*?

In the passage following the reference to the 'Third World', Matsuda notes 'I could not help but to think whether it is possible for us to discover *another Japan* – another Japan which is expressible as a concrete material map'.[30] Matsuda then describes his desire to rewrite the official map of Japan as his personal premiss of getting involved in the making of *A.K.A. Serial Killer*. The discovery of homogeneous landscapes, which exist like equidistant points of a line that constitutes an alternative 'map' of Japanese archipelago, is therefore explained, at least in part, as an antistate cartographic endeavour. Other critics of the *fûkeiron* have also suggested (albeit implicitly) that the homogenization of landscapes in rural and urban cities of Japan must be read as visible symptoms of the consolidation of postindustrial capitalism. In other words, the concept of landscape for these Japanese theorists writing at the end of the 1960s meant something more than picturesque scenery. When read critically, landscapes enabled them to see a visual 'diagram' of social and economic relations, especially those of domination, at work. Despite their apparent privileging of class over other modes of disempowerment, their reconceptualization of landscape as a diagrammatic mapping of power relations thus deserves attention.

Since a map, by definition, is a non-mimetic (and hence diagrammatic) mode of representation, Matsuda's introduction of cartography into the theoretical discourse of the *fûkeiron* would naturally complicate our

29 For his detailed discussion of the concept of the 'Third World' (as an imaginary space), see Matsuda Masao, 'Sien no kûkan', in *Fûkei no shimetsu*, pp. 165–82.

30 Ibid.

reading of *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and *The Secret Story*. The general understanding of cinema as a photo-realistic medium, which presumably reproduces the optical impression of reality, is clearly not compatible with the diagrammatic practice of cartography. The question then becomes: how do we understand the relationship between these two modes of conceiving landscape as the photo-realistic 'document' and the non-mimetic 'diagram'? In order to answer this question, I shall first examine the formal characteristics of the filmic texts themselves.

As I have discussed already, despite being called landscape films, *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and *The Secret Story* present neither pastoral nor sublime scenery, but rather generic urban and rural townscapes. In *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and the film-within-the-film in *The Secret Story*, the first thing one notices is the discontinuous shot transitions. Moreover, shots appear self-contained and static, like meticulously framed postcard photographs. This is more strongly demonstrated by the film-within-the-film of *The Secret Story*. Here the camera holds a fixed position, keeping the 'tableau'-like appearance of shots. For instance, the main body of the film-within-the-film of *The Secret Story* is composed of six long-takes with a fixed camera position, each shot lasting more than sixty seconds.

Although the reel that includes these 'tableau' shots also contains a few jerky handheld shots of cityscapes, the main body of it consists of these fixed-frame shots of highly composed 'landscapes'. These long-takes present a view of rooftops, a small shopping street and pedestrians, a guardrail occasionally obscured by passing cars, an underpass with a postbox beside it, a small tobacco shop filmed across railway fences, and television antennae and telephone lines filmed against an empty sky. Nothing spectacular or dramatic happens in any of these shots. Similarly, *A.K.A. Serial Killer* consists of a series of actuality shots: train stations, airports, docks, railway tracks and back alleys, occasional glimpses of newspaper delivery boys and schoolgirls commuting by bicycle in distance. Without having any identifiable human actor to hold a central position inside the frame, shots begin to bleed into one another, while an endless score of free jazz is heard on the soundtrack. Even with the occasional male voiceover, which states the basic facts of Nagayama's journey (moving from one city to another), the film as a whole seems to lack a coherent narrative.

Moreover, to emphasize the flatness of the surface of the screen, these two landscape films maximize their use of the horizontal axis. In *A.K.A. Serial Killer*, the camera often pans laterally, along the wall, along the streets and along the movement of vehicles. The spectatorial desire to hold objects in deep focus is constantly thwarted by the obtrusive lateral blur of shadows, fences and trains running across the frontal plane, momentarily, but repeatedly, blocking the complete view of the objects in deep focus. Shots are discontinuously edited together, and repetitive closeups of partial views of vehicles, such as the wheels of aeroplanes or lorries, are abundant. The result is a uniquely frustrating experience for the spectator, forced to take an external position to the screen space, who

remains unsutured. Similarly, the six 'tableau' shots of *The Secret Story* present no narrative logic to explain their successive placement. Taken together, these shots present all the characteristics of early cinema, which Burch defines in terms of 'the autarchy of tableau', 'horizontal and frontal camera placement', 'maintenance of shots', 'centrifugality' and 'narrative nonclosure'.[31]

The crucial effect of these formal devices is the externality of the spectator's position in relation to the screen space. The transition from what Burch calls the 'primitive mode of representation' of early cinema to the 'institutional mode of representation' of mainstream narrative cinema occurs when the spectator, who was externally positioned in relation to the screen space, becomes emplaced within it. This 'psycho-physiological orientation of the spectator' is done through a combination of narrative and formal devices, such as the use of the axial match, the eyeline match, the shot/reverse-shot and narrative closure. In other words, the historical emergence of mainstream narrative cinema is marked by 'the cinema's *centring* of the spectator' which makes him or her the point of reference around which the narrative space–time is structured.[32]

We can infer from this that *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and the film-within-the-film in *The Secret Story* are neither narrative films nor even documentary films, if we understand the term 'documentary' as the established genre of filmmaking which is structured by what Philip Rosen calls 'the centralization of meaning through internal sequenciation'.[33] Rosen's phrase refers to the way in which shots are organized, such that this centralization delimits and regulates meanings communicated by the filmic text. This characteristic applies to both mainstream narrative cinema and documentary. Importantly, Rosen also argues that documentary filmmaking (as theorized by John Grierson and others since the 1930s) and mainstream narrative have something in common: just as narrative cinema 'ejected the actuality film' from its proper terrain, documentary film came into existence by rejecting the newsreels and actuality films.[34] In other words, it was not enough either for institutional narrative cinema or for documentary film simply to set up the camera 'in front of an unprepared chunk of reality, turning it on for a few minutes, and then presenting the result to audiences', as early actuality films had done.[35] Similarly, in his discussion of early cinema, Tom Gunning notes that early trick films and actuality films lacked 'dramatic articulation of a story'.[36]

It is precisely this lack of dramatic articulation of a story that characterizes both *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and the film-within-the-film of *The Secret Story*. These two landscape films thus undertake a curious formal appropriation of the preclassical cinematic genre of actuality films. What would be the reason for this appropriation? Before I answer this question, a brief overview of the actuality genre would be helpful.

The term *actualities* or *actuality* films refers to a genre of preclassical, pre-institutional silent cinema, which was very popular during the first decade of cinematic production roughly between 1895 and 1904.[37] The

31 Noël Burch, *Life to Those Shadows*, trans. and ed. Ben Brewster (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990).

32 Ibid., p. 209.

33 Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 245.

34 Ibid., p. 242.

35 Ibid.

36 Tom Gunning, '"Primitive" cinema: a frame-up? Or the trick's on us', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 28, no. 2 (1989), p. 8.

37 In reference to the Lumière brothers' actuality films, Mary Ann Doane writes, 'The actuality dominated the first decade of film production'. Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 22. According to Philip Rosen, 'the commercial heyday of the actuality in various forms was 1896-1903. Preclassical narratives emerged as one of the leading products during 1903-4, but actualities remained a common component of the film viewing experience until around 1908'. Rosen, *Change Mummified*, p. 164.

best examples are those of the Lumière brothers, inventors of the cinematograph. Among numerous actuality films produced during this period, the ones shot outdoors, such as *New York: Broadway at Union Square* (1896) by the Lumière brothers and *Skyscrapers of New York City from North River* (1903) by G.A. Smith, bear striking similarities to these two Japanese landscape films. Take the example of the second 'tableau' shot in *The Secret Story*, in which the camera is set at one end of a narrow shopping street; pedestrians walk in and out of the frame while a small pickup truck passes slowly. Though different in time and place, the fixed frame of *New York: Broadway at Union Square* shows a similar movement of pedestrians walking in and out of the frame. The films contain neither elaborate narratives nor dramatic events, unlike scripted films.

Although such actuality films are considered to be precursors of the documentary film, the documentary as a genre first came into existence by rigorously differentiating itself from the actuality.[38] When Grierson defined documentary film as the 'creative treatment of actuality', what he had in mind was clearly not a simple assemblage of actuality footage. For instance, in his critical assessment of various 'shorts', Grierson writes: 'They do not dramatize, they do not even dramatize an episode: they describe, and even expose, but in any aesthetic sense, only rarely reveal. Herein is their formal limit, and it is unlikely that they will make any considerable contribution to the fuller art of documentary'.[39] In his emphasis on drama, Grierson thus shares the same ideology of narrativity, which characterizes institutional cinema. It is an ideology of unity and coherence; both documentary film and narrative cinema emphasize narrative coherence and control over the production of meaning. The actuality film, in contrast, tends simply to *display* the scene, captured by the camera as if to show a slice of life. The production of meaning in actuality film is, in short, not as strictly controlled as in the documentary or mainstream narrative cinema.

If *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and *The Secret Story* return to the formal stylistics of actuality film, it is because of the openness of the textual production of meaning and the external position of the spectator in relation to the screen space. In other words, the very absence of narrative in the landscape films forces the spectator to stay outside the screen space. These landscape films' appropriation of the actuality genre could thus be read as an indirect critique of documentary filmmaking practice. As I mentioned earlier, this critique is incorporated into the diegesis of *The Secret Story* through a deliberate opposition set up between the documentary footage of armed student protests and the actuality footage of quotidian landscapes. A sequence of the documentary footage that activist characters aim to shape into a coherent narrative is clearly linked to the militant ideal of 'film as a weapon', while the actuality footage of eventless landscapes remains its antithesis. Similarly, *A.K.A. Serial Killer*'s refusal to dramatize Nagayama's life and its decision to focus upon homogeneous landscapes takes a strong stance against the radical documentary filmmaking of the time.

38 Philip Rosen writes, 'In its own originary self-definitions, the documentary tradition shares the denigration of preclassical cinema as primitive with its putative other, mainstream fictional filmmaking. If proponents of documentary banished the newsreels that became a secondary mainstream product from their realm, it is all the more clear that actualities could not be admitted. In the 1930s Grierson himself associated actuality films with an outgrown childhood – his own as well as the medium's'. Rosen, *Change Mummified*, p. 243.

39 John Grierson, 'First principles of documentary', in Forsyth Hardy (ed.), *Grierson on Documentary* (London: Faber & Faber, 1966), p. 146.

In his essay titled 'Closed chamber, landscape, and power of domination', Matsuda uses the term *jikkei eiga* to describe *A.K.A. Serial Killer*:

> The reason why we, including Adachi Masao, in making a strange work – which can only be called an 'actual-landscape film' [*jikkei eiga*] rather than a documentary film – had followed the footsteps of the 'serial killer' Nagayama Norio by passing through the eastern half of Japan; Abashiri, Sapporo, Hakodate, Tsugaru Plane, Tokyo, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka, Kôbe, and even through Hong Kong; and filmed only the local landscapes, which Nagayama would have seen with his own eyes – is because we became conscious of the landscape as the antagonistic 'power' itself.[40]

Of particular interest for us here is Matsuda's suggestion that the film *A.K.A. Serial Killer* should be called actuality rather than documentary. This corroborates what I have suggested is landscape film's formal appropriation of the preclassical genre of actuality film. But let us come back to the question of political efficacy of such formal critique of documentary film: why was it necessary for the filmmakers of *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and *The Secret Story* to criticize the dominant mode of documentary filmmaking in the first place? This question takes me back to the point discussed earlier in relation to the cartographic imagination tied to the relations of power. The question of 'power' [*kenryoku*] that underlies the problematic of landscape needs to be examined further.

In the above quotation, Matsuda writes that after following in the footsteps of Nagayama in the process of making *A.K.A. Serial Killer*, he became conscious of 'the landscape as the antagonistic "power" itself' [*tekitai shitekuru 'kenryoku' sono mono*]. Landscape is a way in which economic and political relations of domination and subjection manifest and become visible to the observing eyes. The mediating act of filming, however, must also allow the spectator to experience the same revelation while viewing the filmed landscapes. The flatness and stillness of landscapes shots – which are structured like the shots in early actuality film – force the spectator to stay outside the screen space. This externalization of the spectator positions her as a kind of a distant observer. Of course, this may risk putting the spectator into the position of the 'transcendental' subject, which Baudry and others criticize. But it is precisely because the form (actuality film) is not in itself critical that the attendant discourse of *fûkeiron* must be introduced in order to complete the political efficacy of *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and *The Secret Story*. A lack of attention to the theoretical discourse on landscape at the time of these films' production would hinder our comprehension of the scope of their political trajectory. Indeed, the work done by western scholars – from Edward Branigan to Burch, David Desser to Maureen Turim – on *The Secret Story* (often said to be Oshima's 'most difficult' film) has collectively missed the significance of the film's peculiar treatment of landscape.[41]

40 Matsuda Masao, 'Misshitsu, fûkei, kenryoku: Wakamatsu eiga to sei no 'kaihô'', *Bara to mumeisha*, p. 123.

41 Edward Branigan, 'Subjectivity under siege: From Fellini's $8\frac{1}{2}$ to Oshima's *The Story of a Man Who Left His Will on Film*,' *Screen*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1978), pp. 7–40; Burch, *To the Distant Observer*, David Desser, *Eros Plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988); Maureen Turim, *The Films of Oshima Nagisa: Images of a Japanese Iconoclast* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

When viewed in relation to the film-theoretical discourse of the *fûkeiron*, however, the shots of landscape in *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and *The Secret Story* attain a dual visibility: they become the document (of homogeneity) and the diagram (of economic and political power relations). In short, the homogenization and the standardization of the various landscapes become visible evidence of Japan's postwar economic development, concentric migrations of labour and correlative circulation of standardized commodities. Nagayama's class background as a migrant lumpenproletariat is indeed already engraved in the landscapes of the cities he had traversed.

The film-theoretical concept of landscape, which Japanese critics discovered at the end of the 1960s through the mediation of *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and *The Secret Story*, thus offered them a new way of seeing landscapes as manifestations of structural changes occurring in Japan as it reached its postindustrial phase. These films document increasingly homogenizing urban and rural landscapes, but these landscapes also reveal what Deleuze calls the 'diagram', that is, the invisible relations and functions of power in the given social field.

In his reading of Michel Foucault, Deleuze explicates Foucault's concept of power as function, not as form. Deleuze thus uses the term diagram (which Foucault initially used in his discussion of the panopticon in *Discipline and Punish*) to explain the specific arrangement [*agencement*] of power, which can be applied to various instances and locations (from prison to school, from hospital to military training camp). It is important to distinguish the mechanism of power, which Foucault and Deleuze express by the term diagram, and the architectural blueprint of the panoptic prison drawn by Jeremy Bentham in 1791. While it is this flat, diagrammatic figure that enabled Foucault to exemplify the mechanism of disciplinary power and to gain knowledge of its working, the term 'diagram' as used by Deleuze refers to the pure function of such disciplinary power (and not to the diagrammatic representation of the architectural design).

In the words of Deleuze: 'The *diagram* is no longer an auditory or visual archive but a map, a cartography that is coextensive with the whole social field'.[42] What Deleuze calls the diagram in its strict sense is the invisible abstract functioning of power in a given social field; it is a term that refers to the nondiscursive mechanism of relational forces, not to the strata of knowledge formed by visibilities and statements. Bentham's drawing is only a visual aid to understand the mechanism of the panopticon as a generalized model of the functioning of power in a disciplinary society. Furthermore, there are not just one but multiple diagrams; every society at any given moment operates through a set of diagrams, some of which are more dominant than others.

Similarly, when taken together, the discourse of *fûkeiron* and landscape films might be read as interlocking sites of visibility and invisibility. The assemblage of filmic images of homogeneous

42 Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Seán Hand (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 34.

landscapes in *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and *The Secret Story* would correspond to the form (a blueprint) that allows the spectator to conduct a certain critical 'reading' of the diagram that is at work in Japanese society at the end of the sixties. However, this is not to say that the knowledge of the diagrammatic functions of power is immediately given to the spectator. The spectator must actively 'create' her or his own reading – we may call this activity diagramming – of the relations of power that are neither immediately legible nor visible onscreen. This is why the concurrent formation of the discourse (which belongs to the dimension of knowledge) by the *fûkeiron* critics deserves attention, and is essential for the understanding of these two films.

What are the diagrams of power which the spectator may infer from *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and *The Secret Story*? Let us take the six 'tableau' shots from *The Secret Story*. We immediately notice the telephone lines, postbox, railway and bridge, all of which constitute the invisible networks of information and commodity circulation. Moreover, these networks are sustained by what Paul Virilio calls the 'policing' of open space by the state: 'The State's political power ... is only secondarily "power organized by one class to oppress another". More materially, *it is the polis, the police, in other words highway surveillance*.'[43] Indeed, the invisible yet immanent presence of state control over the open space of quotidian life is exactly what Matsuda articulates in his writings on landscape: the 'power' in his essays is a synonym for 'state-power'.

Yet this is where his theory of landscape falls short of grasping the real workings of power, which is no longer centralized under the sovereign control of the state. The image of landscapes in *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and *The Secret Society* clearly indicates that power is not synonymous with police, military or parliamentary power, but with transportation and infrastructure – in short, pathways of commerce and information. By 'documenting' the existence of this infrastructure, films point to the state's role as a secondary support for commerce rather than as the primary sovereign power. This may also indicate the shift from the 1960s – the era of the anti-state political movements emblematized by the mass protests against the Japan–US Security Treaty (ANPO) – to the 1970s, an era marked by the consolidation of Japan's late capitalist consumer society. This is where I also locate the symptomatic waning of the centralized mode of imagining political resistance, which had been anchored around the anthropocentric figure of the subject [*shutai*] that had for so long dominated the political imagination of postwar Japanese intellectuals.[44] While Matsuda and other critics associated with *fûkeiron* may still think of resistance within the classical anarchist framework of the repressive model of state power, the 'landscape films' themselves have already suggested, albeit implicitly, the necessity of dislodging the concept of power from the central authority of the state.

As I mentioned earlier, precisely because the actuality-inspired shots of the banal landscapes in *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and the film-within-the-film of *The Secret Story* do not present any narrative framework to

43 Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology*, trans. Mark Polizzotti (New York, NY: Semiotext(e), 1986), p. 14.

44 I am thinking of the discourse on subjectivity [*shutaisei*], which was first articulated by the *Kindai bungaku* critics and writers in the immediate postwar period and which was carried on by the Marxist critics (such as Yoshimoto Takaaki) well into the 1960s. Given Oshima's earlier stance – his emphasis on the cinema of subjectivity and his critique of war responsibility of the earlier generations – it is worth considering Hara's role in scripting *The Secret Story of the Post-Tokyo War*. For a critical analysis of the postwar debate on subjectivity [*shutaiseiron*], see J. Victor Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

understand *why* the images of landscapes matter, the knowledge of the attendant discourse of *fûkeiron* is essential to an understanding of these films. Against those who may argue that the 'actuality' captured by these films is already a historical document of a bygone era, I would suggest that the films are not just documents, but are in fact part and parcel of the larger theoretical practice of analyzing the relationship between cinematic visuality and historically specific diagrams of power.

The study of Japanese cinema in the West has been marked by a lack of interest in the theoretical endeavours of Japanese filmmakers and critics. While I do not believe that scholars working in the field of Japanese cinema today would naively claim that the Japanese collectively hold a 'disdain of theoretical practice', the presumption that theory is somehow a particularly western practice is slow to die in the field of film studies.[45] Although this essay by no means attempts to offer a comprehensive view of the long tradition of Japanese film theory, it has both highlighted the hitherto overlooked Japanese film-theoretical practice at the end of 1960s and its importance for the understanding of two filmic texts in particular, and historicized the codified notion of theory as something uniquely western.

45 Burch, *To the Distant Observer*, p. 12.

Television studies and the idea of criticism

JOHN CORNER

There has recently been a growth in discussion and dispute about 'values' in the study of television. This has gone along with an increased use of the term 'aesthetic' to signal a refreshed emphasis on matters of form and creative quality, following perception of their relative neglect.

Articles in journals on both sides of the Atlantic have made contributions to this dialogue, but Jason Jacobs's recent overview of the issues is, I think, of particular interest, making useful references to earlier interventions concerning ideas of quality.[1] The example around which much of Jacobs's argument turns, partly in response to previous writing, is *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*[2] Put bluntly, the core question here is whether, and by what set of criteria, this successful series is any good or not. Do its production values and performance skills deserve positive recognition? Does the fact that it gives pleasure to a huge number of people deserve some critical respect? Or is its populist address best met with suspicion, its clear grounding in the idea of massive monetary reward the necessary object of ethical and political critique? *Big Brother*, together with the diverse forms of 'reality television' and the greatly expanded range of lifestyle series, could equally well serve to highlight the values in contention. Historically, British debate about soap opera and sitcom also shows clearly the tensions arising from a wish to affirm examples of 'good television' using different combinations of criteria, and at the same time to avoid the quality discourses of established arts criticism in favour of something privileging more strongly social and political factors and ideas of cultural democracy.

Defending popular programming against 'elite' disapproval appears to have become a routine task of academic television criticism, undertaken

1 Jason Jacobs, 'Television aesthetics: an infantile disorder', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2006), pp. 18–33. Jacobs cites Christine Geraghty, 'Aesthetics and quality in popular television drama', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2003), pp. 25–45. An important earlier call for more specific attention to the issue of 'quality' is found in Charlotte Brunsdon's 'Problems with quality', *Screen*, vol. 31, no. 1 (1990), pp. 77–90.

2 One key point of disagreement is with Matt Hills, 'Who wants to be a fan of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*', in Catherine Johnson and Rob Turnock (eds), *ITV Cultures: Independent Television Over Fifty Years* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005), pp. 177–95.

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doi:10.1093/screen/hjm035

in different ways according to context. Certainly, as a 'move' in academic writing, it is now far more frequently made than its opposite, the hostile dissection of 'popular' programming in the light of its political and commercial (ideological) terms of articulation. However, this critical dynamic still remains active, as Jacobs's own comments show.[3]

Within the upsurge of debate around form and value, the idea of 'criticism' itself seems positioned for further appraisal. What kind of an activity *is* this, particularly when performed upon a television programme? Given its basis in kinds of 'expert subjectivity', what are its possibilities and limitations in producing knowledge and judgement that go beyond the personalized reading positions that initially inform it?

Dispute about the functions of criticism, including its basis and scope, form part of the history of scholarship in all the arts. But writing on television inflects the issues in particular ways and part of this particularity follows from the fact that so much of it, notwithstanding the strengthened tendency towards defence I noted above, has been done as *critique*, as a calling of attention to *deficits*. The various forms of criticism have a long tradition of wrangles over quality, but few bodies of writing can rival that on television in so regularly seeing not only individual works but, often, the medium itself as deserving of negative judgement. This judgement is sometimes offered in a spirit of transformative possibility, but more often it carries a strongly terminal ring. I want to pursue briefly some points about the present state and possible future of television 'criticism' as a mode of analytic practice.

Criticism and subjectivity

As a discourse of arts value, criticism varies in the extent to which it is prepared to admit the subjectivity and relational character of its judgements or, conversely, to affirm them as propositions about the intrinsic qualities of works and, perhaps, their social significance. Phrases such as 'in my reading', 'for me' and 'I find' pepper some accounts but are rigorously excluded from others. Grounded essentially in an *experiencing of artefacts*, criticism has a necessarily subjective dimension. It is a precondition that there has been an encounter and an interaction between work and self. This is one of the things that distinguish it from sociological and linguistic accounts, which prefer to conduct their analyses with minimal reference to subjectivized experience, privileging instead more objectifiable data. However, criticism not only varies in the way it admits subjectivity, it also varies in the extent and manner to which it wishes to transcend it.

Academic criticism of television has shown, until quite recently, a tendency towards the culturally, sociologically and politically categoric. Its accounts have been objectified away from 'personal response' and 'personal opinion', whatever their origins there, towards a more general propositional status. In part, this is because it has often been far less

3 The US context is, of course, rather different both for the medium itself and for the academic perspectives on it. A recent issue of *Cinema Journal* (vol. 45, no. 1 [2005]) sharply reviews the current cultural position of television and the kinds of critical attention, or neglect, which it receives.

interested in aesthetic appreciation than in social implications. More than critical work on popular music, popular film and popular literature – although there are important variations between approaches here – it has tended to collapse or compress programme specificities, including aesthetic factors, in the interests of moving more quickly 'upwards' to offer what amounts to a *cultural sociology* of genre and medium. Here, the links (greatly aided by the shared word) between the established humanities notion of 'criticism' and the idea of 'critical theory' as a particular philosophy of cultural critique, dominated by the writings of the Frankfurt School from the 1930s through to the continuing commentaries of Habermas, have been important. This tendency has been aided by a strong sense of the relative low aesthetic density of television as a medium, a sense often linked to its perceived identity as more a continuous flow of industrial product, albeit one increasingly multi-sourced, than the site for specific and discrete creativity.[4] The idea of television as essentially marked by a pervasive banality still informs much newspaper criticism and provides the grounds for sustaining much television reviewing as a space in which comic derision is a staple mode. Such a role of humorous cultural denunciation can be contrasted with literary reviews, film reviews and the attention given to live and recorded popular music.[5]

There is an illuminating, if only partial, comparison to be made between the development of academic television criticism and certain strands of literary criticism. These strands would include the work of F.R. Leavis, in which judgement of quality in a work was in large part a function of its perceived ethical and social integrity and was then used as evidence in a broader engagement with cultural and social values. This was frequently 'critical' in the sense both of offering an evaluation of specific works and of quite often finding severe fault with what was there. One key difference, of course, would be that Leavis regularly used certain writers and works as a normative canon, indicating the positive and inspiring combination of values that 'great writing' could possess. Television criticism has generally been a bit short on positive exemplars, preferring in its more hopeful modes to emphasize potential rather than achievement.

Although fiercely dogmatic in practice, Leavis offered his 'readings' as a dialogue of interpretations with other members of the 'critical community' ('This is so, is it not?', 'Yes, but ...' being favourite formulations, bringing out the provisional, dialogic quality of judgement).[6] A 'critical community' is a rhetorical construct, partly defined by a measure of self-sufficiency in the critical expertise of its members as a group in dialogue. Although film studies has steadily developed (for better or worse) what I think can fairly be called a sense of 'critical community', with canonical works playing some part in this development, television studies has for a variety of reasons not gone down this route. For a start, its radical sociological ambitions, together with its concern for the broader terms upon which 'the popular' is

4 This idea has always been much stronger in the USA, largely as a consequence of the different economic and cultural profile of the industry. Again, an issue of *Cinema Journal* usefully reviews the current situation (see fn. 3).

5 An excellent general survey of the deficits of television criticism in newspapers through to the early 1980s is given in Michale Poole, 'The cult of the generalist: British television criticism 1936–82', *Screen*, vol. 25, no. 2 (1984), pp. 41–61. Mark Lawson, 'Why newspapers should stop publishing TV reviews', *Critical Studies in Television*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2006), pp. 104–7, offers a polemical view of the present situation from an arts broadcaster.

6 This idea of interchange is to be found widely in his writings, but F.R. Leavis, 'A note on the critical function', *Literary Criticism*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1961), pp. 1–9 gives an early and full exposition.

constructed as a primary shaper of television, have presented obstacles, including those of direct political objection, to such a means of securing its assessments.

Leavis's 'terms of engagement' became a strong and problematic influence upon the subsequent development of radical literary criticism in Britain, in part through the various phases in the work of Raymond Williams. Less directly, they also had a formative influence upon the development of the 'critical reading' of media texts as a core method of cultural studies in the work of Richard Hoggart and the early work of Stuart Hall, informing their attempts to generate 'critical' (that is, deficit-spotting) social interpretations through 'critical' (that is, closely analytical) attention to textual form.

Interestingly, whereas radical literary critics in general wanted to break out from the subjectivity of the critic–work encounter in the direction of a radical history of *evaluative contexts of writing* (Williams's work on the novels of the 1840s being a classic example),[7] cultural critics of television wanted to break out of it principally in order to comment on likely *evaluative contexts of viewing.* Their critical discourse was ambitious not so much in 'shadowing historiography' as in 'shadowing sociology' by producing an account of effects and influences. This ambition went through a strong structuralist turn in the 1970s, the defining implications of which for theory and method in television studies are still active.[8] However, this turn was itself partly displaced by the 'turn to the audience' that reconfigured much of international media studies in the 1980s. In part introduced to supplement and refine structuralist 'readings', particularly in relation to the vexed issue of television's role as an agency of ideology, this ended up first by problematizing the very idea of analytic textual readings and then, in some versions at least, abolishing the very notion of the 'text' itself.[9]

Given this history, what kind of warrant does 'television criticism' now have for generating propositions about social and political issues? We might want to start by observing that critics in all the arts have a right to extend their accounts beyond their immediate encounter with the perceived qualities of artefacts. This encounter is the primary point of reference for criticism, but a concern with broader questions of the social structures, meanings and values within which the work operates and which it variously reflects and refracts has been an important part of the critical dynamic too. However, even though reflexivity is a requirement of good critical practice at every level, the contingency and speculative character of judgements in this broader sphere warrant a distinctively more rigorous mode of reflexive recognition and monitoring. Television criticism's routine tendency to be at least as interested in social and political settings and consequences as in localized creative practice carries heightened risks of the overstated and the underevidenced claim which it has quite often been happy to ignore in the interest of free-wheeling judgement.

7 Raymond Williams's case-study of the 1840s is developed in the chapter 'The analysis of culture', in *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961).

8 An assessment of the mixture of elements from various 'isms', particularly structuralism in relation to poststructuralism and Marxism in relation to postmodernism, would be an important component of any broader mapping of the current theoretical identity of film and media studies.

9 The idea of the television 'text', though variously at risk of being absorbed within grander, flanking conceptualizations of production or consumption, is a notion with some resilience, as regular moves to 'return to it' suggest.

Criticism and value

Criticism has a strongly normative dimension. In a manner that conflicts with the protocols, if not all of the practice, in social science, material is often selected precisely to illustrate normative judgements and to give them further enforcement. Formal or aesthetic value provides a core element of critical evaluation, although the value of a 'work' cannot be reduced to questions of form even in the case of painting and music, and certainly not in the case of literature, drama, film and television, where social representation and social argument are intrinsic to the identity of the artefact. As noted earlier, the constructions of popular taste provide a determining framework for much television work, whereas for many other areas of the arts (including, for instance, independent cinema) they are a marginal factor. As Jacobs observes, this sustains within the area of television studies a strong version of 'popular–elite' tension.

'Criticizing' high-end drama, where a relative discreteness of textual identity and strong authorial values connect closely with theatre and film, carries the least risk of getting involved in this tension. 'Criticizing' soap opera, sitcoms, reality television, game shows and a whole range of daytime entertainment programmes plays into it directly. And this is to talk only about judgements on the programmes themselves, what I might term *primary judgements*. Any move to *secondary judgements*, direct judgements on the broader culture and politics that the programmes evidence and perhaps support, and to which their audiences might be regarded as variously wittingly or unwittingly affiliated, opens out further the terms of the popular–elite playoff. Jacobs correctly observes that this has become more heightened in recent years with the emergence (as part of the more general if uneasy shift from terms of critique to terms of affirmation) of academic critics who wish openly to align themselves with popular taste (as fan-critics or critical fans) and are, perhaps, suspicious of any moves towards grounding criteria independently of this datum.

Criticism and form/aesthetics

Form is, of course, a core dimension of television's textuality, and a failure to address it brings the risk of slipping into the naivety of discussing 'content' without concern for the transformative work of 'televisuality' as process and cultural mode. Quite rightly, the social sciences have been regarded by many critics as being routinely prone to making this kind of error, and the history of academic television criticism shows regular moves to put form more forcefully on the agenda. In very different ways (and ones interesting to compare), Raymond Williams, John Hartley, John Fiske, John Ellis, John T. Caldwell and, more recently, Karen Lury have been influential in sustaining, through successive revisions, a focus on form in the context of wider developments in the field. These developments include shifts in the

television economy and in the applications of technology as well as revisions in cultural theory and analysis.

'Aesthetics', although sometimes used as a grander alternative to 'form' or 'discourse', raises rather different questions. It is a word that finds it hard entirely to escape its eighteenth-century origins, particularly its use by Kant to indicate the transcendent qualities of creative endeavour. Its strongly affirmative connection to the idea of art and its legacy of application to serious and great combinations of vision and technique in the high tradition have made it quietly strategic in putting the case for the symbolic complexity and 'richness' of television against the prejudices I identified earlier. Unlike 'form', it both suggests significance in the object of inquiry and gives status to the inquiry itself as a mode of intellectual practice.

Again, the sheer range of television as a generic system raises questions of precise application. While it seems perfectly possible to discuss serious drama, quiz shows and indeed the weather forecast under the heading of 'form', framing them in terms of their 'aesthetics' might seem odd. How can study of the densely worked imaginative aesthetics of drama be even remotely comparable to analysis of the modes of portrayal used in weather bulletins? However, I would want to support the idea that all forms of television deserve sustained focus in respect of their 'art-like' properties as well in relation to their other aspects. The fact that many television programmes are more directly about the *production of knowledge* and less about the *production of pleasure* than most traditional forms gathered within the category of 'art' does not undercut an aesthetic approach to the medium, nor does the fact that the pleasures of television are much more deeply and quietly interconnected than most other forms (including cinema) with the everyday. However, these factors do make problematic the idea of a general television criticism – an analytic discourse able to bring descriptive and evaluative precision to bear on any given programme. Moreover, to offer a judgement on the news, a quiz show, a weather forecast or many other kind of programme *primarily* on the grounds of their aesthetic organization is to perpetrate a category error in the terms of engagement. Other factors loom larger, including those to do with their production and organization of knowledge, their handing of the propositional as well as the imaginative and the nature of their functionality within given economic, political and social circumstances. 'Criticism' as a mode of inquiry is stretched well beyond its capacities in trying to handle these on its own and it will, inevitably, have recourse to reduction and foreclosure if it tries.

Criticism and the development of television research

Claims for the further consolidation of the television text as a core point of inquiry have played off against claims for its further dispersal as

merely one point of reference in a processual or systemic field of multiple indicators. Criticism's stock clearly varies with such emphases.

As a contributing discourse to research on television, criticism will always have a distinctive awkwardness. Those wishing to develop it into something more rigorous, something able to segue more directly into the social sciences, are likely to be disappointed. A good deal of critical work will, when judged by the standards of other analytic approaches, seem to be loose, opinionated, speculative and inclined to mix strict argument with assertion. However, the directness of its engagement with television as symbolic practice, its personally-inflected evaluations of quality and meaning, its disputations about deficits and possibilities, are important elements of the attention that the academy needs to bring to the medium as part of its broader intellectual engagement with culture and media.

If wholesale revision of criticism's procedures is unlikely, an increase in its self-awareness is not. Further reflexivity in its acts of claims-making and the contingency of their grounding are urgently necessary.[10] So too are better levels of connection with the formal and aesthetic frameworks (the 'value worlds') of production.[11] An increased engagement with the kinds of consumer aesthetics which might emerge from conceptual renewal in studies of reception is an essential part of further development too.[12] In both cases, such linkage can lead to a thickened rather than a diminished sense of television textuality as the productive focus of critical investigation.

Certainly, the wider involvement of critical readings as one element within studies drawing on other approaches is to be encouraged. There is a tendency for those who do criticism to do it with too much self-sufficiency, while investigations framed largely within social studies frameworks often give too little attention to those issues of meaning and value which criticism takes as its core agenda.

Lacking the relative coherence of 'critical community' that frames the debates of many of the other arts, with a 'critical object' widely heterogeneous in its communicative modes, a strong sociological ambition and a necessary and often uncomfortable articulation to the dynamics of the popular, television criticism's way forward certainly poses a challenge. Further attention both to its intellectual character and its possibilities would be welcome.

10 Robin Nelson brings this out well in 'Quality television', *Critical Studies in Television*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2006), pp. 58–71. In its section 'Critical contexts', this issue has other articles showing the liveliness of debate about value that I noted earlier.

11 Significantly opened up in respect of British television by Georgina Born's *Uncertain Vision* (London: Secker and Warburg, 2004).

12 Annette Hill's work is illustrative here, particularly her studies across perceptions of generic coding. See Annette Hill, *Re-Styling Factual TV* (London: Routledge, 2007).

A response to John Corner

KAREN LURY

John Corner's discussion of television criticism is characteristically wide-ranging. In this short response, I use his observations as a starting point from which to refute certain assumptions and anxieties that seem to me to unnecessarily inhibit television criticism in the academy.

For me, the important question is not just what can television criticism *do* but how is television criticism *different* from other kinds of art criticism? What is it about television that can make it interesting (important, significant, 'worth talking about') *as television* in a way that does not simply create a series of niche approaches that, as Corner suggests, are pragmatic or sensitive to the 'categorical' differences between the various genres and/or numerous audiences for television? How might it be possible to deal with or make connections between the 'production of pleasure' and the 'production of knowledge' in different (or indeed the same) television texts? Is there a way to harmonize the criticism of – or at least establish a real equivalence in terms of attention, thought and care – between texts that are said to be popular (reality shows, sitcoms, soap operas) with those deemed to be elite (complex, authored or HBO dramas, prestige documentaries) and even perhaps incorporate those texts that may not be either (news programmes, weather reports, children's programmes, channel idents)? How does television criticism pay attention to both the past (appreciate old texts as well as new ones) and the future (from analogue to digital, to Hi-Definition television and beyond)?

The first challenge is, I think, to resist the concept of 'value' or 'more awkwardly' the championing of 'good-ness' as the primary ambition of television criticism. One of the reasons I was interested in television studies in the first place was precisely because it allowed me to engage with or reflect upon the meaning, emotion or play of texts in ways that

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doi:10.1093/screen/hjm036

challenged criteria that I felt simply could not articulate or even acknowledge the personal, everyday, social and sentimental expression of knowledge and pleasure that was part of my appreciation of television. I do not think that this means that television criticism need necessarily float on a sea of unreflective relativism (or narcissism) or be purely celebratory (Corner's reference to the dual nature of criticism – as evaluation and critique – is pertinent here). All too often, however, terms like 'value' or 'excellence' and 'quality' seem to me ways of smuggling in taste hierarchies established via criteria related to other art forms – whether this is film, literature, music or painting. I think these terms consistently refuse to prove useful for the way in which television addresses its audience. That is not to say that television as a *form* is not dependent on practices, modes, orchestrations of light, sound and colour that were first created, and continue to be articulated, in these arts; rather that the *aesthetic* of television (and I use this term to relate to affect) has its own specific qualities. And it is the fact that this aesthetic is, as Corner notes, 'deeply and quietly interconnected with the everyday' with all its complexity, banality, strangeness, familiarity, happenstance and routine which makes the concept of 'value' (whether the critic is seeking out timelessness or transcendence) pointless. There is no escape from the everyday; or rather, in sleeping, dreaming, working, in sex and in watching television, each everyday is occupied by a series of escapes and returns. If it can be agreed that television criticism is addressing the encounter between viewer and text – recognizing this as offering opportunities to both escape from *and* return to the individual everyday – then this experience will be interesting, revealing and worth understanding, whether it is a two-year-old girl watching the *Teletubbies*, or a forty-year-old man watching *Deadwood*.

In rejecting the search for value and in embracing the complexity of the everyday I do not intend to abandon the idea of a general television criticism. While the two-year-old girl's and the forty-year-old man's encounter with television are different, there are aspects of each individual experience – the intellectual, emotional and affective push and pull of the television text in relation to the viewer – that I believe work in a similar way. Television studies has often divided the critic's work up into useful but circumscribed parcels: chapter headings, books, library sections even university courses, which variously and separately examine television audiences, texts, institutions or history. Surely the project should be to bring these together, to be ambitious rather than cautious in our approach, to risk those 'freewheeling judgements' Corner is wary of. Like many others, I attempt to do just this – driven by textual analysis, I also pay attention to production contexts, institutional practices and policies, to audience response and to history in the attempt to 'get at' why television matters and makes meaning. Thus far, however, I have avoided a theoretical framework or, more precisely perhaps, a conceptualization of the affect generated by a television aesthetics. Perhaps now, at a historical juncture where television or televisuality as a

readily understood and accessed experience may be about to disappear, it ought be possible and necessary to review the grand ambition of a television aesthetics without caution, irony or anxiety.

It is well known that television is an everyday, all-day, everywhere medium. The texts relayed to the audience through the television screen are therefore informed by a particular relation to duration, to the situated nature of our personal lives and individual experiences. Television producers and broadcasters know this, although they may not entirely understand it. Narrative forms like the soap opera, the expanding diegetic universe of dramas, the necessarily familiar faces and places of television news, the art of the schedule, the branding of channels and programmes, the packaging of digital bundles of channels all relate to the fact that for most people television inhabits and rubs along with our everyday world, with 'who we are'. This means that television has an extraordinary ability to create the kind of experience or meaning-effect that reverberates – that moves both backward and forward in time, which allows, as I have suggested, for an escape and return to the everyday. The closest theoretical explanation of what I am implying here is, I think, Brian Massumi's employment of the term 'topology'. In *Parables for the Virtual*, he suggests that:

> The overall topological figure is continuous and multiple. As a transformation, it is defined by vectors rather than coordinate points. A vector is *transpositional*: a moving-through points. Because of its vectorial nature, the geometry of the topological superfigure cannot be separated from its duration.[1]

I am suggesting that the distinctiveness of television's aesthetic is that it is topological, so that the complexities and relations between the different kinds of space and time in the encounter between viewer and television text cannot be separated from one another. This insists upon the engagement between the autobiography of the viewer (which is their history, their knowledge, their place) with the various and specific spatial qualities and duration of the programme (that is the space and time represented and orchestrated by the programme – its textual qualities, in part, determined by its production and transmission history). Perhaps Massumi's topological figure might be another way of imagining the concept of flow: in this conception, however, the viewer is present indelibly and inextricably as an active, historical agent.

Put simply, topology (as it is used here) implies that aspects related to space (the situated context of the viewer, the spatial qualities of the visual image, the dimensions of the screen, the ambience of the sound) cannot be separated from time (the age and personal history of the viewer, the running time of the programme or scene, the duration of the programme text, the order in which the programme is watched, whether the programme has been watched before). And it is in the instances when the critic is most sensitive to these twists and turns of space and time that the affect – or in Massumi's terms, the 'intensity' – of television's aesthetic

1 Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 184–5.

can be grasped. I am not suggesting something new: indeed, such dynamic revelations already exist and are often expressed at the intersection of the personal and the social, sometimes where the critic has been surprised into an autobiographical move, an awareness of self that is more or less conscious.

For example, in Jason Jacobs's essay (already cited by Corner) he analyzes the form and narrative of the US hospital drama *ER* (NBC, 1994–). His analysis of the title sequence, as others have noted, is both effective and persuasive. However, for my purposes, it is in Jacob's self-reflection on his experience as a long-term viewer of the series through which I grasp what the series has done and can do. In this passage, Jacobs describes a scene from an early episode in which one of the original main characters – Dr Mark Green – is pictured, at the end of the programme, looking back into the ER itself after a busy Christmas night, concluded by the (as Jacobs notes, rather cliched) birth of a baby. He comments:

> And looking back after seven seasons of *ER* it is clear that Mark's 'unravelling' is the beginning of a series of medical and personal catastrophes that he is confronted with and which effectively turn him from caring doctor to potential murderer: his competency is challenged, his wife leaves him, he is beaten up, his authority is undermined, his parents die, he suffers from brain cancer. The nonchalance of that look back at parents and emergency room is cruelly paid out, perhaps excessively so. That final image is haunted by the possibilities of his future.[2]

Here, I think Jacobs sensitively articulates how instances from television can exemplify Massumi's concept of intensity, whereby 'intensity would seem to be associated with nonlinear processes: resonation and feedback that momentarily suspend the linear progress from past to future'.[3]

The term 'intensity' is here preferable to 'emotion' because, as Massumi defines it, intensity is not qualified in the same way that emotion is. While the sequence in itself, as Jacobs describes it, is clearly designed to be moving and to generate emotion (tears, pleasure, comfort and joy), Jacobs's response both acknowledges these emotions and exceeds them. To use Massumi's terms, the sequence creates intensity via 'temporal and narrative noise'. At the very moment of moving forward with the television narrative as it unfolds (since the narrative necessarily moves forward in the present of watching) Jacobs looks back from the future (seven seasons away). From a present that is therefore also the future, Jacob reviews the past/future of a character that he might well have predicted (since any television character's life is likely to be eventful) and which he now knows. Thus while Dr Green is paradoxically haunted by the possibilities of his future, Jacobs as critic is suspended, caught in an instance of 'resonation and feedback' which both pulls him deeper into the text (how much he knows and feels about the programme) and pushes him away back into his own life-story

2 Jason Jacobs, 'Issues of judgement and value in television studies', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 4, no. 4 (2001), p. 437.

3 Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, p. 26.

(implicitly here how much time – his time measured in seasons – has passed).

If I were to suggest that the aesthetic of television has a 'punctum' in the manner discussed by Roland Barthes (in relation to photography), this would be it. The punctum, or the evocation of the mysterious pull of a specific detail in a photograph, is given a variety of qualities, many of which are recalled here via television. The punctum, Barthes states, has the 'power of expansion', it is the personal (emotional, visceral) response to detail, and finally, 'it is an addition: it is what I add ... and *what is nonetheless already there*.'[4] In this moment of suspension (or affective intensity) Jacobs recognizes and is struck by Dr Green and the 'nonchalance of that look back' – a trigger, which in a graceful move, both amplifies and generates his own look back to his personal and affective engagement with the programme.

Vivian Sobchack describes a similar, affective trigger in her analysis of the New Year's Eve montages broadcast annually by different US television channels. Sobchack reflects explicitly on the rub between personal and social histories, on the disturbing mix of knowledge, pleasure and anxiety articulated in these sequences. Indeed, she identifies the montage itself as a topological figure, folding back on itself like a Mobius strip. Discussing the montage in its entirety, she suggests that

> it marks both a temporal ending and beginning but, through its lack of linear chronology and a grand narrative, it blurs the difference between them: are we mourning or celebrating the end of the beginning or the beginning of the end? The montage is temporally open-ended yet closed. On the one hand, it suggests not merely a progression but an endless series ('Time marches on'); on the other, it suggests an eternal structure ('Shit happens'; 'In the end is the beginning'.)[5]

In this passage Sobchack reveals how a routine, if 'special', instance of television programming provides another potential instance of suspension. First, she notes the ambiguity of emotion (are we mourning or celebrating?) Second, the collision (or perhaps collusion) of feelings about the future and visions of the past, which allow the viewer to glimpse the future whilst simultaneously reflecting on the past. This, I would argue, is an experience that is both commonly found in and distinctive to television. It is not significantly different to the way in which loyal viewers of soap operas witness and predict how characters will (and do) leave, marry or die, or how reality talent-show audiences experience the endless rehearsals and progress of their favourite reality stars. Writers, producers and broadcasters may understand that this is the effect that they are working for when they script the various births, deaths, pratfalls and epiphanies of characters and as they plot narrative arcs and construct brand identities, but they cannot guarantee or determine the generation of *affect*. This is because the affect I am referring to here is not the same as the emotions that might be explicitly triggered by the predetermined opportunities for tears or laughter. Like

4 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Fontana, 1984), p. 55.

5 Vivian Sobchack, '"Happy New Year and Auld Lang Syne": on televisual montage and historical consciousness', in James Friedman (ed.), *Reality Squared: Televisual Discourse on the Real* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), p. 104.

Jacobs's response to a particular sequence from a particular episode of *ER*, individual viewers' response to incidents, events or sequences in television programmes will often exceed any anticipated, preordained emotional excitement in unpredictable ways. Affect here is an altogether vaguer sensation that is not truly representable, on the cusp of being both imminent and lost. It is more akin to an awareness of self, a visceral friction between memories and speculations that have personal, social and historical dimensions. It is both unique to the individual television viewer and also shared between and across audiences; in this sense it brings the television audience and the various texts of television together. The work of the television critic if they are interested in *television*, as part of the way forward in television criticism, should be to stop anxiously retreading debates monopolized by, and appropriate only to, other art forms and instead to allow for, and attempt to understand, this affect and its subtle play in the complexity of our everyday, ordinary worlds.

Creativity: from discourse to doctrine?

PHILIP SCHLESINGER

report

This is a short report on work in progress.[1] It centres on the idea of 'creativity', which is presently of key importance to current UK government thinking about the 'creative economy'. Creativity, I shall argue, has established itself as a hegemonic term in an increasingly elaborated framework of policy ideas. Although my focus is on the UK, we are addressing a body of thought that is now increasingly international in scope.

The ideas in question are influential and set the terms for thought and action across a number of policy fields. Not for nothing has David Puttnam, a key New Labour figure, said that 'the importance of the creative industries was quickly enshrined as *an article of faith*'.[2] An analysis of New Labour discourse reveals an underlying credo – itself a fit subject for the critique of ideology. A concerted effort is underway to shape a wide range of working practices by invoking creativity and innovation. These attributes are supposed to make our societies and economies grow in a fiercely competitive world.

At present, official thinking circulates in a dominant culture of largely uncritical acceptance. Alongside the elaboration of the doctrine of creativity by the government policy apparatus is a specialist discourse of academic analysis. If it is now fashionable to see the creative economy as pivotal to the wider economy, this view is certainly not limited to policymakers.[3] As creativity has moved centre stage, it has also become extraordinarily banal. The mark of its present hegemony is that it is also increasingly ubiquitous. 'British creativity', for instance, ensures market success for Thornton's, the chocolate manufacturers, so their advertising tells us. Not on its own, to be sure: cocoa and sugar are added ingredients.

1 An earlier version of this article was originally published in *e-compós*, no. 7 (December 2006), p. 23. URL: http://boston.braslink.com/compos.org.br/e-compos [accessed 7 July 2007]. This work is based on research undertaken for an AHRC-funded project on 'Creativity: policy and practice: a study of the UK government, the BBC and the UK Film Council', ID No. 112152. Thanks to my co-investigators, Simon Frith and Richard Paterson, for their stimulating thoughts, and to Martin Montgomery for his critical comments.

2 'Foreword' to Chris Bilton, *Management and Creativity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. viii (my emphasis).

3 See Stuart Cunningham, 'What price a creative economy?' *Platform Paper*, no. 9, July 2006. URL: http://www.currencyhouse.org.au/pages/pp_issue_09.html [accessed 7 July 2007].

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doi:10.1093/screen/hjm037

In a district near to mine in Glasgow, there is a 'creative hairdresser'. My inbox is regularly assaulted by spam, offering courses to explore my creativity (and temptingly, to develop my ludic qualities) in New York City and various European locations. So far I have managed to resist. Such examples could easily be multiplied.

The creative economy as a discourse

In the UK, the discourse of creativity has been developed by government for the past decade and is currently being bound into a conception of the 'creative economy'. Official thinking is discursive in the sense that it is a self-sustaining outlook increasingly driven towards consistency. It has become a doctrine by virtue of being an object of unceasing advocacy by its proponents. It is now an obligatory starting point for those who wish to enter into dialogue with policymakers.

In an astute analysis of New Labour's political language, Norman Fairclough has demonstrated how it embodies a particular world view, linking 'assumptions about the global economy that lead to an emphasis on competition between Britain and other countries ... a project of "national renewal" designed to improve Britain's competitive position'. 'Creativity' – like 'knowledge', 'skills' and 'enterprise' – has been a key trope from the start.[4]

Although the formal beginning was marked by the installation of Tony Blair's New Labour government of May 1997, much of the ground was prepared well in advance. As Jim McGuigan has noted, there were two dimensions to the incoming government's approach to cultural policy.[5] One was symbolic – a projection of a new mood, but in reality a kind of regressive modernization whose key symbol (until it became manifestly absurd and discredited) was the Millennium Dome at Greenwich.[6] This aspect, associated with marketing and public relations, treated the nation as though it were a brand. The other face was that of 'cultural policy proper', which promoted creative industries not only as an assertion of national identity but also as a key form of economic competition. In part, these ideas reflected an earlier phase of Labour Party thinking, which had taken 'cultural industries' to be a central instrument of economic and urban regeneration – a line to some extent also pursued by the Conservative Party.[7] It was at this moment that tropes were coined that, with minor modifications, have survived for a decade of Labour rule. For instance, the idea of the UK as a 'creative hub' for the whole world economy is still very much in play.

Nicholas Garnham has argued that Labour Party policy was deeply influenced by the Thatcherism that preceded it.[8] He also sees creative industries policy as an outcome of earlier 'information society' thinking and has suggested that arguments about international competitiveness and deregulation characteristic of the Thatcher period have been carried through from the 1980s to the present day.

4 Norman Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language?* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 22 – 3.

5 Jim McGuigan, 'National government and the cultural public sphere', *Media International Australia*, no. 87 (1998), pp. 68 – 83.

6 Students of the absurd and hubristic now have the 2012 Olympics to dissect.

7 McGuigan, 'National government and the cultural public sphere', p. 71.

8 Nicholas Garnham, 'From cultural to creative industries: an analysis of the implications of the "creative industries" approach to arts and media policy making in the United Kingdom', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2005), pp. 15 – 29.

New Labour made the creative industries part of their pre-election economic strategy in the run-up to the May 1997 general election. What was then labelled the 'cultural economy' was seen as a key and growing segment of the national economy and as offering comparative advantage. In the earlier idiom, the 'cultural industries' were touted as offering a 'creative base' for the UK. This transitional period foreshadowed the melding of these ideas into 'creative industries'. The range of activities then identified as relevant was to be formalized by what came later – the 'mapping' of the creative industries.

After the 1997 election, the UK government set up the Creative Industries Task Force. It was intended to secure collaboration between government and industry, thereby producing a context for sustainable growth in the newly designated creative industries.[9] The *Creative Industries Mapping Document* was published in 1998.[10] In a formulation that has lasted a decade (and is, as we shall see, only now being openly rethought), creative industries were defined as 'those activities which have their origin in *individual* creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation though the generation and exploitation of intellectual property'.[11] The text went on:

> These have been taken to include the following key sectors: advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and television and radio.

The core purpose of the Task Force was 'to recommend steps *to maximise the economic impact of the UK creative industries* at home and abroad'.[12] The logic of economic policy has prevailed.

The pursuit of a creativity policy became a national project – 'branding' the UK as at the global cutting edge. Two key policy nostrums have been continuously in play. First, the UK is imagined as a *competitive nation* for which developing a 'knowledge economy' is essential. This line has become particularly emphatic with the realization that the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) present an increasing threat to high-end 'creative' activities. Education and training therefore become key policy arenas. Second, *government intervention* in the market, and also in establishing conditions favourable to enhancing company performance, is justified as helping to secure the knowledge base. Increasingly, the elaboration of a policy framework to enhance the performance of the creative industries is leaching into other sectors, as 'creativity' becomes a *generalized value* in itself.

Official reports: elaboration of a doctrine

Creative industries discourse has been shaped gradually into a doctrine. Although there has been a division of labour between several departments of the UK state over the creative economy, there is increasing consistency in the elaboration of ideas and arguments, as well

9 Anne Creigh-Tyte, 'Measuring creativity: a case study of the UK's designer fashion sector', *Cultural Trends*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2005), pp. 157 – 83.

10 DCMS, *Creative Industries Mapping Document* (London: DCMS, 1998).

11 It is no accident that this bears a striking resemblance to J.A. Schumpeter's conception of the entrepreneur in *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (London: Unwin University Books, 1970), pp. 132.

12 DCMS, *Creative Industries Mapping Document*, p. 3 (my emphasis).

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as extensive cross-referencing between reports currently being published. This process accords with Fairclough's observation that the New Labour project 'is constantly talked into being, new language is constantly being found to bring these elements into a coherent whole'.[13]

The key ministries have been the Treasury, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI); the Department of Culture; Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The Treasury is the UK government's key spending department. For a decade, its direction was in the hand of Gordon Brown as Chancellor of the Exchequer; he subsequently succeeded Tony Blair as Labour Prime Minister in June 2007. Garnham has noted the importance of 'so-called "endogenous growth" theory which attributed the relative international competitiveness of nations and industries to the institutional structures supporting innovation, part of which was the provision of suitably trained human capital'. This has been Brown's approach.[14]

Surrounding – and in this case supporting and legitimizing – the efforts of government is a wider apparatus of 'governance'. As Jean-Gustave Padioleau has argued, this is the space in which the so-called policy community deploys arguments and makes interventions, entering the game of influence through the production of reports, the setting up of committees, contributing to the media agenda and so forth.[15] This is the terrain of what Padioleau calls the 'practical arts', where the meanings produced for public consumption are meant to be common, accessible, transmissible and able both to guide and constrain conduct. It is a world in which the formula prevails. Those conscripted into the policy intelligentsia do not simply air opinions, but provide evidence that aims to convince and seeks to install a new architecture for public action.[16] The production of the discourse of creativity fits into this analytical model. In what follows, I briefly consider three cases.

Re-engineering businesses

It was no accident that Chancellor Brown commissioned *The Cox Review*, published on 2 December 2005. In his foreword, Sir George Cox, chairman of the Design Council, states that the key issue for 'the UK's long-term economic success' is 'how to exploit the nation's creative skills more fully'.[17] The *Review* was shaped by an awareness of the competitive standing of the 'emerging economies', reflecting another spin of the creativity wheel eight years on from its first public outing.

Cox identified two key areas: 'building a strong relationship between businesses and creative professionals, and strengthening the links across university departments and with industries'. He focused on small to medium enterprises (SMEs) 'which account for 50 per cent of UK gross domestic product (GDP) and provide much of its entrepreneurial base'.[18] The *Review* recommended extensive consciousness-raising in the boardroom, more networking between diverse sectors, establishing links between universities and SMEs and also using the media to develop a

13 Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language?*, p. 4.

14 Garnham, 'From cultural to creative industries', p. 26.

15 Jean-Gustave Padioleau, *Arts Pratiques de l'Action Publique Ultra-Moderne* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), pp. 183–4.

16 Ibid., p. 26.

17 Sir George Cox, *Cox Review of Creativity in Business: Building on the UK's Strengths* (London: HMSO, 2005), p. 1.

18 Ibid., p. 3.

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general awareness of the benefits of creativity and university degree courses to produce new creative specialists.

The *Cox Review* is unusually clear in its attempt to define the dominant terminology:

> '*Creativity*' is the generation of new ideas – either new ways of looking at existing problems, or of seeing new opportunities, perhaps by exploiting emerging technologies or changes in markets.
>
> '*Innovation*' is the successful exploitation of new ideas. It is the process that carries them through to new products, new services, new ways of running the business or even new ways of doing business.
>
> '*Design*' is what links creativity and innovation. It shapes ideas to become practical and attractive propositions for users or customers. Design may be described as creativity deployed to a specific end.[19]

19 Ibid., p. 2.

This conceptual architecture sets out idealized relations between ideas, their exploitation and business practice. Whether this is how things work in practice is a matter for empirical investigation. The slogan about innovation as 'the successful exploitation of ideas' has become the mantra of the Office of Science and Innovation in the DTI whence, I was told, by an informed source, it apparently migrated via the recruitment of senior staff from the global design and business consulting firm, Ove Arup.

Cox's *Review* is intended as a wakeup call: the UK will not necessarily retain its competitive advantage as an advanced economy when an emerging world is catching up and even overtaking the country in the service industries. The UK's strengths in scientific invention and the creative industries are not being carried through 'into consistently world-beating products and services' because of a lack of awareness, confidence, ambition, risk-taking and clarity.[20] Public action is needed, such as new programmes, incentives for research and development, the formation of specialists, and the use of procurement and networking.[21]

20 Ibid., p. 4.

21 Ibid., p. 15.

The *Cox Review*'s discourse combines:

- an economic nationalism that recognizes certain cultural virtues (considered here as creative capabilities) as key to competition on the world stage; however, this is not a simple essentialist nationalist hurrah as 'it's dangerously complacent to think that the UK's creative capabilities are simply *an enduring national characteristic*';[22]
- a conception of the state and its various agencies as enablers in creating a business climate conducive to greater competitiveness;
- a commitment to creativity as a fundamental attribute that requires the nation to undergo widespread 'cultural change' across the fields of production and consumption;[23]

22 Ibid., p. 13 (my emphasis).

23 Ibid., p. 40.

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- a particular vision of an 'enterprise economy' where creativity becomes a *general* feature of economic life, as summed up in the mantra: 'creative businesses are creative throughout'.[24]

Making education 'creative'

Cox's advocacy of cultural change in business has been linked to current official thinking about education, as is shown by my second example.

All Our Futures was published in September 1999 by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education.[25] Chaired by Professor Ken Robinson of Warwick University, one of the UK's home-grown creativity gurus, the report was commissioned by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and the DCMS. The DCMS's then Secretary of State was Chris Smith, an early advocate of the idea of a 'creative Britain'.[26] The committee's membership comprised educationists, artists, scientists and business people. Focused on provision for under-sixteens in formal and informal education, the report responded to policymakers' wish to 'develop "human resources", and in particular to promote creativity, adaptability and better powers of communication'.[27] Robinson and his committee defined creativity as 'Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value'.[28] A 'creative education' is therefore intended to develop 'young people's capacities for original ideas and action'.[29]

According to *All Our Futures*: 'all people have creative abilities and we all have them differently. When individuals find their creative strengths, it can have an enormous impact on self-esteem and on overall achievement.' Robinson's report focuses on bringing out the potential that lies within us all. Creativity is not to be identified solely with the arts or the achievements of elites and the gifted. Instead, 'all people are capable of creative achievement in some area of activity'. This is Robinson's 'democratic definition', which sidesteps the question of socially structured inequality.[30]

There is a clear affinity between the notion that *all* are possessed of creativity and the idea that in businesses *all* personnel should be creative or, at the very least, support the creative endeavour of those specifically designated as 'creatives'. In *All Our Futures*, the demands of the job market are fully in mind. In the 'new knowledge-based economies' what is wanted are workers with creative abilities, people 'who can adapt, see connections, innovate, communicate and work with others'.[31]

Robinson subsequently built on the arguments of *All Our Futures*, moving the focus to 'a broader and longer view of creativity in business and in education'.[32] The argument is both socially inclusive and market-orientated and links strongly to the government's competitiveness agenda. Maintaining that 'everyone has creative capacities', Robinson's interest lies in how these become 'the greatest resource available to an organisation' and in how a 'systematic strategy to generate a culture of innovation across the whole organisation' might be pursued.[33]

24 Ibid., p. 16.

25 National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE), *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* (London: DCMS/DfEE, 1999).

26 Chris Smith, *Creative Britain* (London: Faber & Faber, 1998).

27 NACCCE, *All Our Futures*, p. 9.

28 Ibid., p. 29

29 Ibid., p. 6.

30 This relates to a longstanding debate in the sociology of the intellectuals. Compare Antonio Gramsci's view that while we all must engage in some form of intellection, being an intellectual is a 'social function' restricted to a 'specialized category' of person. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), pp. 9 – 11.

31 NACCCE, *All Our Futures*, p. 13.

32 Ken Robinson, *Out of Our Minds: Learning to Be Creative* (Chichester: Capstone, 2001), p. 205.

33 Ibid., p. 3.

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For Robinson, creativity in corporate settings means fostering 'an atmosphere where risk-taking and experimentation are encouraged rather than stifled'. Like Cox, Robinson argues that 'corporate creativity should be understood as a systemic function of the organisation. ... A strategy to promote corporate creativity and innovation should engage all areas of the organisation.'[34]

Robinson advocates interdisciplinarity, overcoming departmental boundaries, mixing different kinds of knowledge and expertise and loosening up hierarchies. All of this implies a cultural change 'where creative abilities are valued and harnessed to the organisational objectives'.[35] In turn, this requires open-mindedness to experimentation and play and a refusal to be governed by short-termism and the bottom line. Change in companies' and public organizations' cultures presupposes changes 'upstream' in the education system, not least recognition of the effects of the categorical systems used in schooling. 'Creativity depends on interactions between thinking and feeling, and across different disciplinary boundaries and fields of ideas. New curricula must be evolved which are more permeable and which encourage a better balance between generative thinking and critical thinking in all modes of understanding'.[36] We have to move beyond linear rationalism, Robinson believes, and develop a new ecology of human resources.

Robinson's thinking has been influential. Over 100,000 copies of the summary of *All Our Futures* were distributed. His ideas have set the context for the Creative Partnerships programme, officially described as 'the Government's flagship creativity project for schools and young people', which has focused on English schools in selected deprived areas. Established in 2002, this is funded by the DfES and the DCMS and managed by Arts Council England. This programme has spawned its own metadiscourse on what constitutes creativity.[37] The emergent doctrine of educational creativity has influenced ideas about how young people might be harnessed to the creative economy. It has led to yet another report, *Nurturing Creativity in Young People*, published in July 2006 and commissioned by the DCMS and the DfES.[38]

This took its cue from James Purnell who, as Minister for Creative Industries, spoke at an Institute for Public Policy Research conference in June 2005. As cited in the report's preface, he proposed that the UK become the 'world's creative hub' and asked 'what more we can do to nurture young creative talent' in the educational system, suggesting that work was needed on 'a clear set of assumptions which will help to inform the basis of our future policy on creativity'.

Paul Roberts, Director of Strategy for the Improvement and Development Agency, authored *Nurturing Creativity*. The report constructs a highly self-referential universe. For instance, its section on 'new pathways to creative industries' is based on the *Cox Review*'s call for UK business to become more competitive. This part was written by Tom Bewick, Chief Executive of Cultural and Creative Skills, the sector

34 Ibid., pp. 12, 184.

35 Ibid., p. 194.

36 Ibid., p. 200.

37 Shakuntala Banaji and Andrew Burn with David Buckingham, *The Rhetorics of Creativity: a Review of the Literature* (London: Arts Council England, 2006).

38 Paul Roberts, *Nurturing Creativity in Young People: a Report to Government to Inform Future Policy* (London: DCMS, 2006).

skills council set up to develop training and business skills in a wide range of creative industries. Bewick proposes an apprenticeship model and other ways of linking secondary qualifications to the marketplace but notes the lack of 'a support infrastructure in which creative careers can be enhanced or sustained over the long term'.[39]

The report also bases itself on the DCMS's original definition of the creative industries, cited above, and its conception of creativity is taken directly from Robinson's 1999 report. Key proposals include developing a 'personal portfolio – a creative portfolio – incorporating both formal and informal learning, with the learner at the centre. Established by peer review, hosted and promoted by the Creative Industries [sic], physical or virtual in form, it would support personalized learning, assessment for learning and routes into the Creativity [sic] sector.'[40] Charles Leadbeater (a noted guru of the creative economy and adviser to the Blair government) contributed the section on the creative portfolio. Recognition of the range of activities undertaken by young people outside school was connected to a comprehensive set of proposals for embedding creative activity into schoolwork, partnerships with practitioners, pathways to the creative industries and changes in frameworks and regulation to reinforce this shift.

The Creative Economy Programme

My third, and last, example concerns the Creative Economy Programme (CEP), a series of investigations and reports conducted under the aegis of the DCMS. Government interest was first signalled by a conference on the theme in London launched by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Tessa Jowell, in October 2005. Jowell used the occasion to generalize – for the EU as a whole – an argument already exceedingly familiar in the UK. Noting the global competition faced by the EU, especially that coming from China and India, Jowell set out the line echoed only a couple of months later in the *Cox Review*:

> We need to concentrate our efforts on where our strengths lie – in adding value through innovation and creativity. ... If we don't increase our pace of innovation and investment, it will only be a matter of time before Europe's position in the global economy is surpassed. ... Every industry must look to become a creative industry, in the broadest sense of the word.[41]

In November 2005, the DCMS launched the CEP, setting up seven working groups. Their composition reflected established practice throughout the development of creative industries policy of relying on a relatively small coterie of advisers. Industry observers believed that the groups were too dominated by public sector bodies and agencies.[42]

The CEP was described by a DCMS press release issued on 9 August 2006 as 'the first step in achieving our goal of making the UK the world's creative hub'. Its central purpose has been to raise consciousness and assess the value of public systems and programmes. Each working group

39 Ibid., p. 59.

40 Ibid., p. 7.

41 Tessa Jowell, 'Keynote speech to the Creative Economy Conference, London'. URL: http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Minister_Speeches/Ministers_Speech_Archive/Tessa_Jowell [accessed 13 August 2007].

42 A list of those chairing the seven panels and other relevant documentation may be found on the DCMS website. URL: http//www.cep.culture.gov.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.viewSection&IntSectionID=356 [accessed 13 August 2007].

produced a report. The designated areas were: infrastructure, competition and intellectual property, access to finance and business support, education and skills, diversity, technology, evidence and analysis. The CEP has gone through two phases. The DCMS intended to publish a Green Paper in June 2007, but postponed this due to the prime ministerial change. However, its current thinking was reflected in a report, published the same month, by the Work Foundation, endorsed by the Culture Secretary.[43]

Given the limited space available, I shall illustrate current thinking with two examples, drawing on the reports of the Infrastructure Working Group and the Evidence and Analysis Group. In the discussion of infrastructure, ideas first mooted in the 1970s and 1980s made a comeback but in a different context. The keywords are 'global competitiveness' (an orientation to the world economy), 'convergence' (making links across separate activities and boundaries) and 'stimulation'.[44] The latter idea refers to the development of 'core cities' – once a nostrum at the heart of municipal cultural policy in an earlier era of Labour Party thinking.[45] 'Creative hubs' have replaced 'clusters' as the 'in' phrase, but the fundamental idea is the same. Both underline the 'significance of place as the main driver of creativity in the UK'.[46] London and the Southeast are seen as the key locus to which all other creative centres need to be more effectively linked. Competition with the BRIC countries – repeatedly signalled by Gordon Brown and other ministers – is presented as the spur to action. The UK 'needs to reposition itself as the knowledge broker of the global creative economy'.[47] Indeed, to achieve global recognition, London's initiation of a World Creative Economy Forum is bruited.

To bring together the necessary capabilities, a *rationalizing structure* is required – namely the so-called 'Creative Grid', described early on as the group's key recommendation. This has three elements. First, it draws together 'web-based intelligence' on the entire UK creative industries scene. Second, to secure the strategic goals for culture and creativity in the policy machinery, a 'cross-departmental creativity working group' is needed in government along with a 'core cities creativity working group'. And third, a policy of 'developing a creative milieu in creative places' is advocated (which is highly redolent of the *Cox Review*). Ensuring 'a ready supply of talent' and acting as the 'world's creative broker' are additional actions proposed, as is ensuring that the various spaces that nurture creativity interact with the agencies that might facilitate development of the creative economy.[48] Here is a familiar mix of solutions mostly in play for the past two decades. Other working group reports focused on the need to reform business practices, cross-refer to the Roberts report and emphasize the importance of skills development.

New Labour has incessantly proclaimed the importance of 'evidence-led policy'. Consequently, the Evidence and Analysis Group's work is of particular interest as it reflects government's attempt to assess its *own* needs for credible data. Creative industries policy has not been

43 The Work Foundation, *Staying Ahead: the Economic Performance of the UK's Creative Industries* (London: The Work Foundation, 2007).

44 CEP, 'Infrastructure', Executive Summary (2006), p. 4. URL: http://cep.culture.gov.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.view.Section&IntSectionID=341 [accessed 13 August 2007].

45 David Hesmondhalgh, 'Media and cultural policy as public policy: the case of the British Labour government', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2005), pp. 95 – 109.

46 CEP, 'Infrastructure working group', p. 7.

47 Ibid., p. 5.

48 Ibid., p. 6.

able to draw on reliable official sources.[49] It has taken almost a decade to acknowledge openly that the DCMS's mapping documents have lacked adequate detail for a creative industries policy.[50]

The DCMS has tried to conceptualize the creative economy during the course of the CEP. In a first pass, 'production', 'services' and 'arts and crafts' were each distinguished as groupings within the creative industries with their own characteristics, although overlaps were recognized.[51] And then, in the run-up to the now postponed publication of the Green Paper, further rethinking occurred. The creative economy was next envisaged as constituted by four concentric circles.[52] Moving from the centre to the periphery these were labelled as follows. First, *core cultural fields* with commercial outputs possessed of a 'high degree of expressive value' (such as painting and theatre) that invoke copyright protection. Second, *cultural industries* such as film, publishing, music and video games that involve 'the mass reproduction of expressive outputs' and are based on copyright. Third, *creative industries and activities* (such as design and software) for which 'the use of expressive value' is essential, as is the performance of the wider economy. And fourth, there is *the rest of the economy*, which is 'dependent on the expressive outputs generated by' the inner circles, for instance, the design of the Lexus or the iPod. The re-entry of the 'cultural industries' into government discourse is noteworthy.

The conception of the economy outlined above connects ideas about creativity in the global economy as a *necessary* attribute both of competitive businesses and of an educated workforce.

Taking one's distance

This report has sought to demonstrate how several distinct objects of policy have become interrelated by the emergent doctrine of creativity. In addition to this, I have sought to show how, as policy thinking unrolls and the machinery of government gathers up wider circles of adherents by involving them in consultations or in conscripting them to the cause, the system of ideas has gained further currency and has become more fully elaborated. If the doctrine has undergone refinements, these have been conducted from within the tent.

Few voices are presently being raised in public even in mild criticism (although our initial fieldwork has suggested that some of the key actors in the sector well understand the expedient nature of needing to sign up to creativity as a mobilizing clarion-call). A dissenting note has been sounded by Professor Geoffrey Crossick, Warden of Goldsmiths College London, a creative arts university. Crossick was the Chief Executive of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and brought its predecessor body into the UK government's overall science policy apparatus. With this change of status, the arts and humanities became more explicitly governed by ideas of 'knowledge transfer' – and closer to the priorities of the science policy machinery – than before. Crossick,

49 Creigh-Tyte, 'Measuring creativity', p. 158.

50 However, one Labour MP has admitted that figures in Chris Smith's book were 'made up'. See Bilton, *Management and Creativity*, p. 159.

51 CEP, 'Evidence and Analysis', Executive Summary (2006), p. 4. URL: http://cep.culture.gov.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.viewSection&IntSectionID=342 [accessed 13 August 2007].

52 This paragraph draws on a presentation prepared by Phil Clapp of the DCMS for a seminar on public support for the creative industries in Scotland, Centre for Cultural Policy Research, University of Glasgow, 30 April 2007. These ideas are presented in the Work Foundation's report.

against this current, has argued that a simplistic and uniform model of knowledge transfer has been imposed on how universities relate to businesses. What is needed, he suggests, are not models for 'knowledge transfer' but rather proper recognition of how creative networks operate and how knowledge generation is not linear. Instead of knowledge transfer, we need 'spaces in which something can happen'.[53]

Whatever his reservations, Crossick does not dismiss the language of creative industries. Rather he replaces the top-down attempt to regulate and manage the conditions for creativity with the liberal – romantic idea of a happening space. Such circumscribed dissent shows that it remains exceedingly difficult to escape the tentacular embrace of current doctrine and this compulsion underlines the need to produce a radical critique of the origins and impact of the discourse of creativity. Two financial journalists, Larry Elliott and Dan Atkinson, have made a vigorous start. Britain, they argue, is being deluded by 'top-notch exponents' of 'bullshit' about the significance of the creative industries. The size of the 'knowledge economy' has been inflated and hyped. Key industries – film, television, music and games – have lost ground in global competition. The scale of employment in the creative industries has been overblown. In their refusal to take claims about the creative industries seriously, they combine economic argument with a blunt dismissal of 'government propaganda'.[54]

However, others have undoubtedly absorbed the government's line and this has practical implications. That is because the doctrine of creativity is now an animating ideology for the so-called digital age. The CEP may be seen as the latest attempt to rationalize interdepartmental cooperation, to make effective the flow of business intelligence, to encourage networking, to bring together dispersed creative clusters and to foster talent. All of this is geared – in the approved lingo – to making the UK a global creative broker.

Of particular interest for my own research is in what form ideas about creativity and innovation become organizationally embedded and to what extent they shape the actual *management* of creative practice. Several distinct elements need to be analyzed and related. Amongst these are first, the broad sweep of policy thinking and its origins; second, the new solutions offered by policymakers as they encounter obstacles; and third, how ideas about creativity are actually interpreted in the practice of production.

As the work proceeds, the aim is to analyze this process by focusing on two key organizations operating in the broadcasting and film sectors, whose strategies are differently framed by government policy – namely, the BBC and the UK Film Council.[55] Initial findings suggest that the doctrine of creativity is open to – what shall we say – creative interpretation.

53 Geoffrey Crossick, 'Knowledge transfer without widgets: the challenge of the creative economy' (Goldsmiths: University of London, 2006), p. 17.

54 Larry Elliott and Dan Atkinson, *Fantasy Island: Waking Up to the Incredible Economic, Political and Social Illusions of the Blair Legacy* (London: Constable, 2007), ch. 4, with citations from pp. 75, 88.

55 We shall also consider creative industries policy in Scotland, a nation with considerable political autonomy in the UK.

Paul Julian Smith, *Spanish Visual Culture: Cinema, Television, Internet*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006, 184 pp.
Paul Julian Smith, *Television in Spain: From Franco to Almodóvar*. Woodbridge: Támesis, 2006, 176 pp.

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As in his previous work, in these latest two books Paul Julian Smith sets about challenging common orthodoxies. Noting the suspicion of the visual among Spanish cultural critics, who associate it with the superficial, he insists that we should overcome such prejudices, given Spaniards' massive preference for audiovisual over print media. He is particularly concerned with refuting the blanket dismissals of Spanish television as *telebasura* or trash TV, as well as the prevailing pessimism about the Spanish film industry. In doing so, both books make meticulous use of the trade press and of websites, as well as recent Europe-wide media surveys, citing statistics for audience demographics and domestic production's share of the market.

Smith notes that Spanish media pundits tend to assume the need for state intervention in the media to assure quality, while at the same time complaining of government manipulation. Against this position, Smith argues, on the basis of the Spanish evidence, that deregulation can improve quality. He praises Spain for, in 1982, being the third country in Europe (after the UK and Italy) to deregulate television, noting that in 1997 it was the third country in the world to introduce digital terrestrial television.

Spanish Visual Culture also goes against the grain in defending the emotional value of the media – the book's main theme. This is crucial for Smith's defence of popular culture, traditionally maligned for appealing to 'base' emotions, in contrast with high culture's appeal to a 'superior' rationality. Smith is here arguing against the binary logic that separates

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doi:10.1093/screen/hjm038

popular culture from high culture, using audience demographics to show that both quality and 'trash' programmes can appeal simultaneously to mass and upmarket audiences.

Smith's exploration of culture's emotional function leads him to tackle what he regards as an academic commonplace: a US Hispanist view of post-dictatorship Spanish culture as being in thrall to the repressive past, manifested paradoxically through an incapacity to confront its negative legacy. I think it not entirely fair to take, as he does, just three books as the expression of US Hispanism.[1] While I share Smith's misgivings about the notion of a national psyche, his claim that these three books argue that post-dictatorship Spaniards are still in mourning for Franco seems not entirely correct. If Vilarós suggests that Spaniards during the political transition were suffering from a kind of 'cold turkey', surely this is not a mourning for Franco but a realization that the role of the Left is much less clear under democracy. While Medina does argue that post-dictatorship Spain is suffering from a melancholic attachment to the lost Father, he means by this – following Adorno's analysis of postwar Germany – that Spanish governments of the transition promoted historical amnesia in order to create a political void which they could fill with continuist structures. Moreiras-Menor's use of trauma theory to explore post-dictatorship Spanish culture proposes that far from suffering from a melancholic attachment to the past, Spaniards have never been allowed to engage with the process of mourning necessary to come to terms with past violence and repression. It is, however, true that all three writers suppose that post-dictatorship Spain's much-noted historical amnesia is the sign of a failure to work though its violent legacy. Smith breaks with this analysis by proposing that the lack of attention to the past in Spanish culture of the political transition – most notably in the Madrid counter-cultural movement, the *movida*, which brought Almodóvar to prominence – is, quite simply, a sign that the past has been worked through and can be left behind. The implication of Smith's analysis – though he does not say so – is that it is Spanish critics in the US who have an attachment to Spain's violent past, which is preventing them from interpreting the hedonism of post-dictatorial Spanish culture as no more than what it appears to be on the surface: a healthy cult of pleasure, which signifies that Spaniards have indeed been able to move on. This simple argument is a major one. It allows Smith to give a positive account of nostalgia in some of the audiovisual works studied, for he does not see any need to link it to a nostalgia for the political past.

Smith's theoretical sources for the cultural importance of emotion are Martha Nussbaum and Luisa Passerini, neither of whom, as Smith notes, consider television or film in the works referred to. Smith takes up their insistence that emotions can be important forces for political critique. Nussbaum is used to produce a positive reading of Almodóvar's *Hable con ella/Talk to Her* (2002) and Spanish national television TVE's most successful series, *Cuéntame cómo pasó/Tell Me How It Was* (2001–). Smith reads *Talk to Her* as dramatizing an emotional imperative to

1 Teresa Vilarós, *El mono del desencanto: una crítica cultural de la transición española (1973-93)* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1998); Alberto Medina Domínguez, *Exorcismos de la memoria: Políticas y poéticas de la melancolía en la España de la transición* (Madrid: Libertarias, 2001); Cristina Moreiras-Menor, *Cultura herida: Literatura y cine en la España democrática* (Madrid: Libertarias, 2002).

communicate with the other, even when reciprocity is impossible. He notes the emotional importance in this film of music and dance. Smith also highlights the importance the film attaches to objects, which materialize attachments. In the same vein, his analysis of the television series *Cuéntame* is subtitled 'the emotional history of objects'. This series, featuring a 'typical' Spanish family in the 1960s, the decade of fast-track capitalist modernization, has generally been dismissed as catering to nostalgia for the Franco period. Smith argues that the nostalgia is for 1960s commodity culture, not least the television set, newly installed in most Spaniards' homes and featuring in many of *Cuéntame*'s episodes.

Passerini's oral history work, which reveals the centrality of the domestic to social life, is used to frame Smith's discussion of the 'family plots' of two Spanish television sitcoms: *Médico de familia/Family Doctor* (1995–9) and *7 vidas/9 Live*s (1999–). Here Smith rescinds his earlier criticism of *Family Doctor* for its domesticity, now seen as expressing a 'regime of affect'. Smith notes that this series' emotional contradictions do not enmesh tidily with the politics of Berlusconi, the owner of the private channel Tele5, on which it was screened. For Smith, *9 Lives* was important for being the first Spanish sitcom to deal explicitly with sex, and to attract an upmarket demographic through its ironic self-referentiality and fashion-consciousness. Smith argues that these two sitcoms express a feminine 'ethics of care': this might usefully be explored in relation to the elaboration of an 'ethics of care' in feminist legal theory.

The following chapter on the Madrid *movida* insists on the representation of Madrid's urban spaces as an expression of the pursuit of life, liberty and pleasure. Space is the other major theme in this book, for Smith is interested in the 'locatedness' of affect. His previous work on new Spanish architecture allows him to make a subtle reading of the city as a 'time-space' whose rhythms construct an 'urban apprenticeship'. This is a pedagogy for living that comes from the grassroots, contravening the top-down pedagogical model advocated by Spanish media experts. Particularly subtle is Smith's analysis of the *movida* comic *La Luna de Madrid*, which started publication in 1983; one issue is read as offering an apprenticeship to gay subjects in their rights to the spaces of the city. These are spaces not of consumerism but of sociability: something that Smith sees as central to Gallero's chronicle of the *movida*, *Sólo se vive una vez/You Only Live Once* (1991). Villena's 1999 novel on the *movida*, *Madrid ha muerto/Madrid Has Died*, is read as expressing a nostalgia not for Francoism but for the *movida* – seen as the materialization of a hedonistic sociability. Smith notes that this is very different from the nihilism of British punk, to which the *movida* is often compared. Likewise, he notes the differences between the US or British youth movie and the Spanish equivalent *Historias del Kronen* (1995), which focuses on a space of sociability: the Bar Kronen. Smith uses amateur reviews on websites to show that, contrary to critics'

readings of the film in terms of trauma, young people enjoyed its depiction of the material spaces and objects of youth culture.

I found less satisfactory the chapter on Aranda's heritage movie *Juana la loca/Queen Joan the Mad* (2001), largely because of the lack of discussion of it as a remake of Orduña's massively popular, and much more political, 1948 film on the same subject, *Locura de amor* – Celia Martín Pérez's article on this topic is surprisingly not mentioned.[2] This omission is especially curious, since the following chapter discusses Cameron Crowe's 2001 remake *Vanilla Sky* of Amenábar's 1997 *Abre los ojos/Open Your Eyes*. Smith again stresses the importance of the concrete Madrid urban locations in Amenábar's film, appealing to local knowledge for all its cosmopolitanism and European funding.

The remaining chapters move to unbounded spaces. First, that of the internet, through a discussion of two Spanish internet artists, Marisa González and Zush, theorized via Manuel Castells's insistence that identities are no longer forged by civil society but by virtual networking. Again, this means the replacement of top-down social engineering by new unpredictable forms of grassroots sociality. Smith notes that while González's art is still located in local community (the demolition of a factory in the Basque Country), Zush's images 'represent' his invented private state Evrugo. The final chapter considers recent Mexican–Spanish coproductions, offering corporate studies of two Mexican producers, Altavista and Anhelo, noting the change to a less nationalistic and more commercial ethos, and seeing the treatment of the Spanish actresses (Goya Toledo, Maribel Verdú) cast in the lead roles of González Iñárritu's *Amores perros* (2000) and Alfonso Cuarón's *Y tu mamá también* (2001) as a simultaneous acknowledgement and disavowal of transnational traffic.

Television in Spain takes the same positive approach to Spanish television. While *Spanish Visual Culture* is hugely impressive in the range of material discussed, this book focuses systematically on the televisual medium, working through its arguments in detail. Together with Smith's monographic issue on television in the *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*,[3] this book is essential reading for anyone working in the field. Previous writing on Spanish television, as Smith notes, has focused on the institutional aspects; this is the first book to analyze programme content. The book combines detailed audiovisual analysis with impeccable use of audience ratings and profiles of television channels, independent producers, scriptwriters and actors.

The series *Cuéntame cómo pasó* is here analyzed in detail, as an example of 'witnessing and working through' (in the sense given these terms by John Ellis in his work on US and British television).[4] Thus, Smith argues that if the characters impotently witness events from the 1960s, the audience is empowered to work them through. The next chapter examines two classic serials, adapted from canonical nineteenth-century novels: Camús's *Fortunata y Jacinta* (made in 1980 at a time of state monopoly, often regarded retrospectively as a 'golden age' of

2 Celià Martín Pérez, 'Madness, queenship and womanhood in Orduña's *Locura de amor* (1948) and Aranda's *Juana la loca* (2001)', in Steven Marsh and Parvati Nair (eds), *Gender and Spanish Cinema* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), pp. 71–85.

3 *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2007).

4 John Ellis, *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty* (London: IB Tauris, 2002).

'public-service' television) and Méndez Leite's *La Regenta* (made for state television TVE in 1995, at a time of cut-throat competition with private channels). Smith argues that despite the reduced budget and TVE's formal control by the conservative Popular Party government, neither quality nor social critique suffers. In this chapter, Smith develops the concept of the 'middlebrow', crucial to television studies but ignored by most cultural critics.

The next chapter juxtaposes programmes from different decades which nostalgically recreate the past: the late Francoist *Crónicas de un pueblo/Chronicles of a Village* (1971–4) and *Cine de barrio/ Neighbourhood Cinema* (1995–). Smith argues that both programmes go against the political grain of their time, *Crónicas* giving a sometimes tough vision of rural life (contrary to its idealization in Francoist ideology), while *Cine de barrio*, with its ageing guest stars and screening of old Spanish movies (mostly from the 1960s), unapologetically revives a Francoist aesthetic. (I can add that the elderly people interviewed in 1999–2004 for my project *An Oral History of Cinema-Going in 1940s and 50s Spain*, when they do confess to liking *Cine de barrio*, unanimously express loathing for its unctuous presenter Parada, sacked in 2004.)

The following chapter looks at the urban sitcom *Aquí no hay quien viva/No-one Can Live Here* (2003–), noting the importance of community, in contrast with US or British sitcoms' stress on identity. Smith argues for a notion of Spanish televisuality that is itself communal. Smith shows how the commercial channel Antena 3 has responded to commercial competition by doubling its recourse to independent producers (as with this sitcom), thereby driving up quality. The penultimate chapter tackles talk and reality shows, charting public debate on 'trash TV'. The chapter analyzes the notorious (and, it seems, addictive) *Crónicas marcianas/Martian Chronicles* (1997–2005), broadcast live on the Berlusconi-owned private channel Tele5, with its outspoken presenter and over-the-top guests, stress on audience participation (including viewers' text messages) and occasional degeneration into dogfights (Smith notes that it is much less decorous than its live-to-tape US equivalent, CBS's *Late Show with David Letterman*). Smith stresses this sexually explicit programme's sympathetic representation of gay issues (also tackled increasingly in sitcoms) and, above all, its sociability. Noting that the programme's politics is ambivalent, with regular guests of all political persuasions, Smith argues that it nevertheless provides 'an education in sensibility, in irony and tolerance' (p. 139), since the 'freaks' and eccentrics it showcases are never ridiculed.

Smith also notes that the programme is made in Barcelona and that its presenter Javier Sardà flaunts his Catalan accent. The one criticism that might be made of this book is that it does not consider regional television channels, whether broadcasting in Castilian, Catalan, Valencian, Galician or Basque. The problem of linguistic access aside, this decision

can be defended. By opting for specific case studies, the author has been able to produce detailed audiovisual readings that would not have been possible in a comprehensive overview.

The final chapter switches tack to consider the attention to television in Almodóvar's films – a previously unstudied topic. Smith notes that Almodóvar's production company El Deseo resorted to television production funding, particularly during his more recent auteurist period, at the same time working with actors familiar to Spanish audiences from television. Smith argues that Almodóvar's films have 'given us a hidden history of TV' (p. 146), through their inclusion of commercials, newsreaders, reality TV and closed-circuit TV, while frequently showing characters watching television. In keeping with Smith's stress on Spanish television's function as a model of sociability (something that remains stronger in Spain than in the English-language world), he notes the importance of the scene in *All About My Mother* when the protagonist Manuela watches *All About Eve* on television with her son on their last night together. Smith goes on to argue that the dynamics of Almodóvar's films (individually and as a corpus) obey the principles of regularity, familiarity and openness that characterize television, like television allowing us 'to witness and work through social issues as they are implicated in daily life' (p. 152).

The book ends with an analysis of the television programming available to Spaniards on 20 June 2005, the day that Spain's Socialist government voted in favour of same-sex marriage – fittingly, given the book's stress on Spanish television as an education in sociability and tolerance.

Priya Jaikumar, *Cinema at the End of Empire: a Politics of Transition in Britain and India.* Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2006, 318 pp.

MANASHITA DASS

Priya Jaikumar's *Cinema at the End of Empire* breaks out of the analytic framework of national cinemas that still dominates the disciplinary imagination of film studies, despite recent attempts to dismantle the rubric. While the nation and its reconstitution remain at the heart of Jaikumar's 'parallel narration of the intertwined histories' (p. 1) of British and Indian film cultures in the late colonial period, when the concepts of the nation-state and a national cinema were being constructed in India and reconstructed in Britain, her comparative focus shows how the 'national' and the 'local' are shaped by, and implicated in, the 'transnational' and the 'global', and reveals an array of linkages that cannot be clearly viewed through the optic of a self-contained national cinema. The practice of considering the metropole and the colonies in conjunction has, of course, gained a prominent place on the research agenda of a new imperial history influenced by postcolonial theory but is relatively novel in the field of film studies, where scholarship on (post)colonial film cultures still remains segregated from work on European national cinemas; this monograph thus stages a significant critical intervention in that respect as well.

The book spans the decades from 1927 to 1947, a transitional period in Britain and India in terms of both film and political history: the gradual decline of Britain's imperial power and the moral de-legitimization of colonial rule on the one hand and the gathering momentum of nationalist agitation in India on the other created a crucial context for the (re)shaping of British and Indian film cultures. As British cinema grappled with the mounting embarrassment and instability of empire and

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doi:10.1093/screen/hjm039

the undeniable fact of Britain's 'cinematographic subjugation to the United States' (p. 9), Indian filmmakers struggled to envision a free and possible India while creating a commercially successful and nationally popular cinema in the face of political repression, internal dissent, Hollywood hegemony, competing visions of the nation, a chronic lack of resources and the difficulty of welding diverse linguistic, ethnic, religious, regional, caste and class constituencies into a cohesive Indian audience. Jaikumar tracks these efforts to come to terms with the dilemmas of decolonization through a multilayered analysis of debates around film policy in India and Britain (Part I), of the aesthetics of (re)-imagining the problem of empire (Part II) and the possibilities of nationhood (Part III), treating state policy and cinematic form as 'related areas of contention *between* a fragmenting empire and a nascent nation, as well as *within* them' (p. 3) and as 'linked expressions of political transformation' (p. 4).

In the interwar period, the British film industry found itself fighting a losing battle with Hollywood in the colonies and dominions as well as in Britain itself (where, by 1924, US-owned distribution companies handled 33% of the films screened). This generated a rhetoric of anxiety and victimization, reflected in laments such as 'So far as films go, we are now a colonial people' (p. 9, quoted from *World Film News*, vol. 2, no. 8 [1937]), and tinged by a newfound sense of Britain's declining power on the world stage and of the slow dissolution of empire. In the first section of the book, Jaikumar shows how Britain attempted to counter Hollywood's successful globalization and exploitation of the British film market by mobilizing the empire as a potential market for British film producers, through a combination of diplomatic negotiations, data-collecting enterprises (such as the inquiry conducted by the Indian Cinematograph Committee of 1927) and regulatory initiatives. The most prominent of such initiatives was the British Cinematograph Films Act of 1927 (or the Quota Act), which fixed an annual percentage of British films to be distributed and exhibited within Britain, and has been discussed in film histories mainly in terms of its domestic implications. Jaikumar's analysis highlights the geopolitical context of, and the imperial aspirations embedded in, the Quota Act and its strategically ambiguous conceptualization of the 'empire film' (used variously in the quota debates and the Act to refer to films made with British or empire resources, as well as to films originating from the dominions and the colonies). Retracing a circuitous paper trail of letters, petitions to the state and memoranda that document the efforts of British film producers to profit from dominion and colonial markets through an empire-wide quota system and the mechanisms of 'imperial preference', she argues that the quota debates, the 1927 Act and the 1938 amendment tried to recast empire as trade rather than territory and into an alliance of trading partners, and were thus emblematic of changing political relations during the late imperial period. The Quota Act, for instance, envisioned a new imperial relationship based on diplomacy rather than coercion by

offering special concessions to empire-made films entering the British market, in the hope that British films would receive similar preferential treatment in the dominions and colonial territories. However, as Jaikumar's careful and contrapuntal reading of the debates and negotiations leading to and stemming from the Quota Act illustrates, the dream of 'imperial preference' was thwarted on various levels. British exhibitors and renters opposed the quota system in the name of free trade and in the interest of profits, and often exploited loopholes created by the definitional ambiguity of the 'empire film'; colonial and dominion film industries reacted unfavourably to the proposal of extending the quota throughout the empire; Indian film personnel, for instance, resisted moves to introduce the policy of 'imperial preference' in India, reading this regulatory initiative as a blatantly protectionist move designed to generate profits for British film producers rather than to promote a mutually beneficial system of trade reciprocity between British and India, given the absence of any kind of state assistance to the fledgling Indian film industry and the pronounced lack of interest in Indian films in Britain. In Jaikumar's account of 'markets that did not materialize, films that were not distributed, and bills that were not passed', empire emerges more as a fantasy rather than an actual region (p. 102).

The second and third sections of the book explore textual figurations of political uncertainty in British and Indian cinema of the 1930s, focusing on how the visual and thematic regimes of realism, romance and modernism were deployed to re-imagine an unravelling empire in the former, and to visualize an emergent nation and a new civil society in the latter. Her analysis in both sections is marked by an attention to questions of form and historical specificity and sensitivity to the internal heterogeneity and multivalence of both imperialism and nationalism. Just as her review of film policy debates undermines the notion of an ideologically coherent film industry in either Britain or in India, her discussion of British and Indian films emphasizes their aesthetic hybridity, as well as the diversity of British responses to decolonization and the internal schisms of the Indian nationalist project.

In her discussion of British 'empire films', Jaikumar identifies three distinct imaginative modes – realism, romance and modernism – each of which is characterized by a specific visual and narrative regime, and represents a recurrent style of imperial self-representation and self-justification. She illuminates the operations of each mode through a close and historically situated reading of a film exemplifying it: *Sanders of the River* (Alexander Korda, 1935) representing the realist mode, which naturalizes and reifies imperial hierarchies (such as distinctions between the colonizers and the colonized, savagery and civilization, and so on) and involves an unquestioning acceptance of the imperial project; *The Drum* (Alexander Korda, 1938) representing the romance mode, which acknowledges the contradictory dynamics of imperialism and the conflict of interest between the colonizer and the colonized but displaces these contradictions into the realm of the mythic; and *Black Narcissus*

(Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, 1947) representing the modernist mode, which foregrounds imperial culpability and dissolution but ends up redeeming empire through aesthetic strategies and a sympathetic portrayal of western trauma. British empire films of the 1930s, Jaikumar convincingly argues, can be seen as narratives generated by the impending loss of empire and the pressing need to comprehend that loss, as well as attempts to rehabilitate empire for an era of decolonization. Her trenchant reading of the redemptive thematics of empire thus not only illuminates the past but can also provide us with resources for making sense of a present marked by a resurgence of neo-imperial dreams and anxieties.

As Jaikumar points out in the concluding section of the book, Indian films of the 1930s were also shaped by a politics of transition but the concerns animating these films were generated by the dream of decolonization and divisions within nationalism and the imagined community of the nation, rather than by the colonial encounter between Britain and India (or, more generally, the West and the East. While a repressive censorship regime inhibited the development of an explicitly anticolonial genre of Indian cinema, Indian films provided an allusive commentary on imperialism and the nationalist movement, gave cinematic form to anxieties about the internal heterogeneities of the nation, and offered images of a modern civil society not only through reformist melodramas set in contemporary India (socials), but also through cinematic retellings of myths (mythologicals) and precolonial history (historicals), which transposed visions of the present and the future onto a mythical or a feudal past. As in her earlier analysis of the rearticulations of masculinity in British empire films, Jaikumar highlights the gendered workings of the national imaginary as she deciphers cinematic visions of the emerging Indian nation, pointing to the constellation of contradictory meanings and competing sociopolitical agendas around the figure of the female subject in these films. She also discusses how Indian films articulated their visions of alternative sovereignty by drawing on a wide range of artistic influences – popular Hollywood genres, European art cinemas, Victorian melodrama, Indian visual cultures and performance traditions – and thereby created a hybrid cinematic idiom that gave them a competitive edge in a market dominated by Hollywood and other foreign films.

Though extremely insightful and thought provoking, Jaikumar's discussion of colonial Indian cinema appears to be somewhat less in-depth than her analysis of empire films (this is perhaps inevitable at this juncture, given the sheer diversity of colonial Indian cinema, the lack of adequate archives and the relative paucity of scholarship on this topic). I found myself wishing that this section were longer, that she would elaborate some of her points and take us farther into some of the spaces, issues and archives that she charts so knowledgably and vividly. This, however, can be seen as a sign of the book's success rather than as a shortcoming; the montage of tantalizing glimpses that Jaikumar offers

into a complex and fascinating but underexplored domain of Indian cinema and the creative and significant connections that she makes (between, as well as within, national film cultures) will no doubt catalyze other important and much-needed work on the film cultures of colonial India and, more generally, in comparative film studies.

Joe McElhaney, *The Death of Classical Cinema: Hitchcock, Lang Minnelli*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006, 255 pp.

JOHN ORR

From David Bordwell to Gilles Deleuze and beyond, the nature of classical cinema has long been debated by film theorists, and whatever differences there are, many constants crop up in the discourse – organic action-narrative, empathic stardom, readable mise-en-scene, match cuts, continuity editing, climactic plot resolution. Hollywood is usually taken to be the motor force in world cinema with its veneration of the First Five Minutes and its three-act melodramas cued in as the populist, New World answer to five-act tragedy. The expiry date too has a loose consensus. It tends to hover around 1960, give or take a few years either way. This new study by Joe McElhaney does little to challenge any of this but does try, as its title suggests, to pinpoint the exact 'what' and 'why' of that expiry. It is a fascinating exploration of something often taken for granted. Does the use of the word 'death' exaggerate the transition from the classical to the modern? Is there such a transition at all? In both cases, the banal answer is yes and no. There was some vital fluidity in the transition, but at the same time there were sharp tears in the fabric of the well-made film, a shredding and ripping apart as modernist syndromes dispensed enigma and shock in equal measure.

The conventional critical deal is this. With its ageing stars and tycoons, Hollywood was briefly in trauma as the French New Wave and a handful of Italians radically transformed the language of film (and showed sex onscreen in the bargain); but then the new wave ping-ponged across the Atlantic, as *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Easy Rider* and *The Graduate* cleaned up at the box office in the late 1960s and that upstart brat, Robert Evans, took over at Paramount. By 1970 the ratings system had been loosened, a new generation had arrived and the crisis was largely over.

Screen 48:3 Autumn 2007
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doi:10.1093/screen/hjm040

But the previous generation of Hollywood directors who had come to prominence in the 1940s and were acclaimed as creative auteurs by *Cahiers du cinéma* in the 1950s seemed by contrast to be exhausted and out of touch. Out of this group, McElhaney chooses three names and three films, one for each name, to drive his thesis of classical 'death' over the course of a mid-size monograph. They could have been Hawks, Preminger and Mankiewicz, or Ford, Ray and Fuller, but he opts instead for Hitchcock, Lang and Minnelli and rests his case on three very different films, two of them little seen nowadays – *The Thousand Eyes of Dr Mabuse, Marnie* and *Two Weeks in Another Town.* (Strangely, the naming order in the subtitle – Hitchcock, Lang, Minnelli – is altered in the chronology of the book, where the chapter on *Mabuse* precedes the one on *Marnie*.)

In sum, the study is canonical. McElhaney wants to breathe new life into the *Cahiers* policy of celebrating classical auteurs (even on their last legs) and certainly makes some inventive moves. He takes his cue from the reflexive mandate of Godard's *Le Mépris/Contempt*, which stars Fritz Lang, not long after his last *Mabuse*, as its classical auteur and Jack Palance as its crass, perfidious Hollywood producer, Prokosch, who was not a million miles from the movie persona Kirk Douglas had created in Minnelli's film-life melodramas. The car-ride frenzy of the fractious couple (Douglas and Dahlia Lavi) in *Two Weeks*, which echoes, as the author points out, Lana Turner's car hysteria in Minnelli's *The Bad and the Beautiful* ten years earlier, is then echoed one year later in the fatal car crash that ends *Contempt.* We might add that Godard's use of mise-en-scene here also turns inside out the kind of turbo-charged variant of classical melodrama of which Minnelli was so fond, and almost terminates it for good. McElhaney points out Godard's ambivalence in this respect, the instinctive biting of the hand that feeds him; though it should be added the power of Godard's sharp referencing and bold inversions lies in the visceral nature of his reflexivity. No pussyfooting pastiche here.

In this book, several death motifs are intermingled, sometimes muddily. First, there are veteran directors who start to repeat themselves, often to the point of self-parody, and die their own death-in-life. If it happened to Lang and Minnelli in these two critical films we could add that it has also happened since to Godard as he struggles for audiences in the twilight of his career. Second, after the bold location shoots of *Breathless* and *Hiroshima, mon amour*, Hollywood as a whole seemed suddenly out of touch: the studio standbys of back projection and sound stage exteriors looked stale and old. Clearly, all three films under the spotlight here suffer from this staleness. McElhaney could have pointed out that *Marnie* fails to achieve the precise balance between reality and artifice that Hitchcock had perfected in *Vertigo* and *The Birds.* Third, the narrative modes of classicism were also under threat from a new generation of European and Japanese filmmakers who abandoned closure and celebrated the open, the indeterminate, the ambiguous. Fourth, the

death of classical cinema was all the more decisive because Hollywood had at first no younger auteur generation to reinvigorate it, Thus it was that the young Englishman John Boorman came West courtesy of Lee Marvin to make the enigmatic *Point Blank* and that maverick nomad Roman Polanski cleaned up at the box office with *Rosemary's Baby*, giving us two startling paranoia movies that helped to inaugurate a new disturbing structure of feeling in US film for the decade of Vietnam and racial mayhem. In the UK too, it was foreign directors who moved things on in the 1960s: Polanski again, Losey, Antonioni and Dick Lester all paving the way for the native talent on display in Nic Roeg's *Performance*, while Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* was the decade's icing on the cake.

In terms of its ambitious scope, McElhaney's book is perceptive, admirably detailed and broadly contextual in the very best sense of the word. It certainly knows its late classical period well and connects it assiduously via the pages of *Cahiers* to the accomplishments of the new wave. But it also contains a tortuous strain of mourning the departing before they have departed, of hastening to the sickbed to conduct funeral rites. The author seems to sense that his chosen texts from Lang and Minnelli are not good movies, especially in comparison with what the two directors had already achieved and what Godard is achieving just around the corner, where *Contempt* upstages *Two Weeks* and the last arid Mabuse awaits resurrection in the maverick joys of *Alphaville.* But is this nemesis personal, a sign of *their* distinctive failings to go beyond classicism? Or are they simply overcome, along with their studio contemporaries, by the modernist tidal wave crashing over them? Some of the veterans *did* contribute decisively to the new modernist idiom, not least Hitchcock, whose name seems out of place here. For *Marnie*, about which McElhaney writes with such great perspicacity and conviction, was at the end of Hitchcock's great modernist series which starts, I would argue, with *The Wrong Man. Marnie* is not the flawed exhaustion of a monumental classicism, as the author supposes, but the exhaustion of Hitchcock's rapid and startling modernist transformation. After all *Vertigo* had been so in advance of its time in 1958 that even *Cahiers*, for all its smart-arse anticipation, was at a loss for several years as to how to view it. Hitchcock may have thought he had to catch up with Resnais, Antonioni and Bergman, but at the same time they were busy catching up with him! Now and again McElhaney buys into the intentional fallacy, flagging the anxiety that made Hitchcock want to better *Blow Up*, but at the same time he relegates to an endnote mention of something quite crucial – the bold but aborted *Kaleidoscope* that Hitchcock hoped would be his artistic comeback in the late 1960s. (His copious endnotes are also worth rummaging for Bill Krohn's key observation on *Marnie*, that it was a failed attempt at the impossibility of portraying unconscious desires when guilty secrets had previously been so easy for him. But this could have been in the main text.)

Elsewhere there were other unlikely candidates for the start of the postclassical age that are overlooked. After floundering in the fifties, the

veteran Robert Rossen produced two great East Coast shoots in *The Hustler* and *Lilith*, the former as daringly existential in its own way as *Breathless* and the latter as complex and as shocking as mid-period Bergman. Preminger, it could be argued, helped inaugurate the new wave with *Bonjour Tristesse* and then injected the modernist turn into the Hitchcockian thriller by shooting *Bunny Lake is Missing* in Hitchcock's own backyard. And Sam Fuller guested as himself in *Pierrot le fou*, hotfoot from his totally unexpected and mind-blowing *Shock Corridor.* Meanwhile Arthur Penn and Warren Beatty were acclaimed in 1967 for their new wave-style gangster hit *Bonnie and Clyde* (the official start of New American Cinema for many historians) but they had previously lit the torchpaper in their experimental, much derided *Mickey One.* And so it goes on. There was no clear break, no easy division, no clean or quick death.

While the section on *Marnie* is compelling in both its general perspective and sharpness of detail, ranking among the very best criticism in English on that particular film, the other two sections in this tripartite book are less so. Neither film under the spotlight here is typical for his general theme, for both were made in Europe not the USA. Directing his third Mabuse, Lang had by this time severed his ties with Hollywood almost completely, and Minnelli was repeating in Rome the reflexive motif of the washed-up industry guy from two more powerful 1950s pictures, in prosaic form *The Bad and the Beautiful* and as musical genre *Bandwagon*. Both the Lang and Minnelli sections also owe a lot to the astute criticism of Thomas Elsaesser, who has decisively critiqued both the Mabuse series and the musicality of Minnelli's pictures in separate studies. At the same time, McElhaney sticks too closely to the *Cahiers*/Deleuze line that Minnelli's melodramas were the equal of his musicals but argues the point without much conviction. He knows that in its Roman setting *Two Weeks* had been overshadowed by *La Dolce Vita,* $8\frac{1}{2}$ and *Contempt*, and fails to convince us that a critical rethink is necessary. But then this is about the death of classical cinema, a perverse and prolonged celebration of the act of mourning. Have no doubt about it, this is a good engrossing book, but its constrictive format has left it annoyingly short of what it might have been.

Su Holmes, *British TV and Film Culture in the 1950s*: *'Coming to a TV Near You!'*. Portland, OR and Bristol: Intellect, 2005, 272 pp.

CHARLES BARR

The title, for a start, is puzzling. Does the word culture go with both TV and film, or just with film? Does the book offer to explore the TV culture and film culture of this transitional decade and their interaction, or does it just examine the film culture and the ways in which it was represented and influenced by the expanding medium of television? Either way, it sounds promising.

In the event, it does not really do either. The introductory chapter circles briefly around some concepts of culture and film culture, ranging from Raymond Williams to Tom Ryall, only to settle on this definition: 'For reasons of simplicity, in the context of this study and the focus on the cinema programme, I use the term "British film culture" to signify the films (and stars) circulated, exhibited and consumed in Britain in the 1950s' (p. 16). The term refers, then, to US and foreign-language films and stars as much as to British, and it refers purely to the films and stars themselves, and not to the varied professional and popular and critical discourses about them and about cinema more widely – the things that are commonly and logically seen as helping to constitute a 'film culture'. True to its narrow definition, Su Holmes's book does not offer to engage with such discourses, except occasionally in passing. A less misleading title would be something like *'Coming to a TV Near You!': The Presentation of Cinema on British TV in the 1950s.* The core of the book's project is a study of the early days of the 'cinema programme': the TV programme about cinema, distant forerunner of the more recent vehicles for Barry Norman and now Jonathan Ross on the BBC's *Film* series. And here it certainly delivers something solid.

Screen 48:3 Autumn 2007
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doi:10.1093/screen/hjm041

Readers may recall an article by Holmes in these pages in 2001 about film star interviews of the time.[1] Its high point was a detailed analysis of Joan Crawford's appearance in 1956 on the BBC's *Picture Parade*, broadcast live, where she was interviewed by one of the two regular presenters, Peter Haigh. The bulk of that article is incorporated into the book, as are two further magazine articles published in 2001 and 2004 in US-based publications: on the handling by the British cinema magazines of, respectively, the X-certificate film and the new widescreen processes.[2] The X certificate was introduced in 1951 by the British Board of Film Censors; CinemaScope (the most successful of the new processes) was launched in 1953 by Twentieth Century-Fox; both were in large part a response to the perceived challenge to the film industry of the expanding medium of TV. Scope, allied to colour, offered a visual splendour unattainable on the small screen, while the X certificate acknowledged the validity of the cinema's moves into more 'adult' territory now that its regular audience, and particularly its family audience, was falling away. These two big changes, and the adjustments and debates which they led to, can reasonably be said to have dominated the film industry of this decade, which is precisely the decade of the first of the significant cinema magazines: the BBC's *Current Release* (1952–3), and then, after the ending of the BBC monopoly in 1954, a wider variety, notably *Film Fanfare* (ITV 1956–7) and *Picture Parade* (BBC, 1956–8, and a subsequent revival).

It was a brilliant initiative to excavate and explore these magazines as Holmes has done, working either from recordings or, in their absence, from surviving documentation. Her main thesis is clear and simple: cinema and TV are conventionally perceived as rivals through this period, but the relationship, as played out in this genre that constitutes an interface between them, is much more complex, even symbiotic. The more effective these programmes became, the more strongly they encouraged people to stay at home to watch them, and, at the same time, the more strongly they inspired people to go out to catch the films that had been trailed. There is no contradiction here: in the changed media economy of the decade they could do both. Now that the regular mass audience had been lost and people went to the cinema less often and more selectively, TV could help them choose and keep them interested. Inducing Joan Crawford to appear on *Picture Parade* is a coup for the junior medium, but the 'utter deference' with which Haigh welcomes her (p.160) is a validation of the status of the senior one in a period of transition or overlap during which neither medium was dominant.

The three main case-studies, as published in article form, are fascinating, each one crisply focusing on a specific topic and making fresh and suggestive points. It was obviously a valid idea to collect the articles and make them the nucleus for a wider-ranging study. The book itself, however, fails to build on them as effectively as it could have done.

One reason for this is a curious set of policy decisions. On p. 151 we are told that it is 'impossible to list all of the hundreds of star appearances'

1 'As they really are and in close-up: film stars on 1950s British television', *Screen*, vol. 42, no. 2 (2001), pp. 167–87.

2 Su Holmes, 'The infant medium with the adult manner: television promotes the "X" film (1952–62)', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* (October 2001), pp. 379–97; 'Looking at the wider picture on the small screen: reconsidering television and widescreen cinema in the 1950s', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, vol. 21, no. 2 (2004), pp. 131–47.

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on these programmes. Why impossible? How many hundreds were there? And what about the interviews with others, notably directors? It would be a service to scholarship to provide a list, with dates, at least of those interviews which are known to survive in recorded or transcript form. Having whetted the appetite so effectively, the book offers little help to the researcher who might want to follow up its revelations by looking at, or for, specific material. The source-list at the end names just one edition of *Picture Parade* as having been consulted in the BBC archives – the one featuring the Crawford interview, which may be the only one of which a complete recording was made – and twelve editions of *Film Fanfare*, in the Pathé archives, but no breakdown is given of the contents even of these, and the introductory chapter indicates that a lot more than this survives, including, for the live-broadcast *Picture Parade*, 'a combination of programme footage and scripts'. A further frustration to the reader is the lack of any index – a truly perverse decision by the publisher in a book of this nature.

I can focus some of these frustrations through a specific instance. The other regular *Picture Parade* presenter, alongside Haigh, was Derek Bond, the actor who lived until late 2006; Holmes does not say whether she tried to reach him to get his memories of the programme, which could have been interesting. As it happens, I spoke to him in the mid 1970s, not about *Picture Parade* but about Ealing, where he had been under contract just after the war, and I also asked him how, a decade later, he came to work for John Ford in *Gideon's Day*, the Scotland Yard story shot in London in late 1957 in which Bond has a substantial role as a bent policeman. Answer: he had interviewed him for television, and Ford, in his typical casual way, had said 'if you're really an actor, come and be in my film' – bearing out the point Holmes makes about the importance and influence of the programme, which raised Bond's profile in other ways (p. 125). Does the text mention this interview? Since there is no index, one has to read the whole thing before finding out that it does not. Does the interview survive, as a recording or as a transcript? No information is given, nor even hints; we never learn if transcripts were made of interview material (as opposed to the prescripted material that the book works from, especially in the case of the first of the programmes, *Current Release*).

Recently, in the John Ford archives at Bloomington, Indiana, I came across a copy of the contract for that same interview. Offering Ford a fee of eight guineas, it also indicates that the interview was telerecorded in advance: that is, shot 'as live' by TV cameras, with the electronic image being recorded onto film for later insertion, via the telecine apparatus, into the programme when broadcast. It was telerecorded on 31 May 1957, and broadcast on 10 June at 10 pm as an insert into the live transmission. Holmes states that *Picture Parade* always went out live, unlike ITV's *Film Fanfare*, but she never, I think, gives details of the insertion of telerecordings, of which this is unlikely to have been an isolated instance. Whereas early (post-1958) video recordings were,

notoriously, often wiped because of the expense and reuse value of the tapes, recordings on film had no such value and thus had a better chance of survival, though junking to save storage space was still a hazard.

If that interview, or even a transcript, survives somewhere in the vaults, it would be a great addition to the patchy records we have of Ford talking. And the same surely applies to scores of other items: there must be potential here both for new research material and for a multiplicity of DVD extras. Why not a new edition of the book, with an index and annotated listings? And after that, perhaps a sequel, tracing the cinema programme from 1962 onward.

A new edition could usefully tidy up some other points. There is confusion here and there about technology, particularly in terms of the distinction between filming and telerecording. Panning and scanning (of the widescreen image) is not synonymous with cropping (p. 228). The early pages especially could use a strong copyeditor to weed out technical errors and repetition – the book is hard going until you reach the case-studies. And the strategy of studying press coverage mainly on the basis of files of cuttings collected by the BBC, while understandable, has its disadvantages. *Picturegoer* and some of the trade papers seem to have been consulted direct, but the others through clippings. This means that important sources are ignored, such as *The New Statesman*, *Sight and Sound* and *The Listener*, all of which have lively and distinctive perspectives on TV, and on specific programmes, in this decade of intensive development. It also means that all the journalism tends to be considered as interchangeable, without a consideration of the stance of a given paper. Thus, because it provides a juicy quote, a *Sunday Independent* cutting is used (p. 230) to represent press response on the X-certificate question in 1962:

> *Picture Parade* is still as dirty as ever. The persistence with which this feature selects all the suggestive bedroom scenes is remarkable and consistent. The BBC would not dare to screen a programme of this kind if Sir John Reith were at the head of its affairs. There has been a sad deterioration since he left.

The quote opens the X-certificate section, and is referred to again at the end as a reminder of how 'the press demanded to know "What's gone wrong with the BBC"' (p. 248). The fact that it was by now twenty-four years since Reith left the BBC should be a warning that this is a bit of a rant. Using a single quote as typical has its dangers anyway, and here the source is in fact, as the author does not point out and perhaps did not realize, a Dublin one – a rightwing, aggressively Catholic paper that was strongly supportive of the still rigorous Irish film censorship policies and concerned about the 'dirty' material being beamed with impunity into Ireland, or at least the Eastern part of it, from a foreign country. This is interesting in itself, especially since the BBC was evidently monitoring the paper and taking cuttings for its files, but it is hardly relevant to the topic of British reaction, which was far more balanced. All of this is

symptomatic of the thinness of the book's engagement with the wider media 'cultures', as noted at the start of this review.

Yet it is a measure of the value of the book – of its central inspiration and of its core material – that one is left feeling eager to have a bigger and better version, preferably one that is more accurately titled.

Ernest Mathijs and Murray Pomerance (eds), *From Hobbits to Hollywood: Essays on Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings*. New York, NY, and Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006, 403 pp.
Ernest Mathijs (ed.), *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context*. London: Wallflower, 2006, 224 pp.

DUNCAN PETRIE

When I moved to New Zealand from the UK in early 2004, two issues dominated local news and discourse. The first was an increasingly acrimonious dispute between the government and the indigenous Maori over the latter's claim to customary rights over the foreshore and seabed, resulting in a major protest march and the founding of a new Maori political party. The second was the nation's preoccupation with the Oscar triumph of *The Return of the King*, directed by 'local hero' Peter Jackson, which had picked up a record-equalling eleven Academy Awards.[1] Despite their obvious differences, these two issues share common ground in terms of the way each signifies an apparent challenge on the part of the underdog to hegemonic power relations within particular spheres. If the former is evidence of ongoing Maori resistance to New Zealand's colonial legacy of British settlement and appropriation, the latter would seem to affirm the ability of a small peripheral filmmaking nation to make its mark in the US-dominated global motion picture entertainment industry. For from an Antipodean perspective, *The Lord of the Rings* temporarily wrote New Zealand into mainstream cinema history. Produced under the auspices of New Line Cinema, a subsidiary of the US-based TimeWarner media corporation, *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy – adapted from the celebrated novels by J.R.R. Tolkein and comprising *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), *The Two Towers* (2002) and *The Return of the King* (2003) – was a mammoth undertaking. The three films were shot back-to-back over a fifteen-month period at a production

1 This was the same number of awards won by *Ben Hur* in 1959 and *Titanic* in 1997.

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doi:10.1093/screen/hjm042

cost of somewhere between US$280 and US$310 million. They have also been hugely profitable, generating earnings of more than US$4 billion when film exhibition, home video and DVD, television screenings, soundtracks and other ancillary merchandising are factored in; at the time of writing, *The Return of the King, The Two Towers* and *The Fellowship of the Ring* are ranked as the second, fifth and eleventh highest-grossing feature films of all time.[2] Even more remarkable was the fact that this epic example of Hollywood moviemaking was not only directed by a filmmaker strongly identified as a New Zealander, but that the entire shoot and postproduction of the trilogy took place in New Zealand and featured, with the obvious exception of the principal cast members, local creative talent and facilities.

It is appropriate that such a milestone in cinema history should generate an appropriately weighty academic response, of which the two edited collections that are the focus of this review constitute just the first instalment. Both volumes are edited by Ernest Mathijs – jointly with Murray Pomerance on *From Hobbit to Hollywood* – who along with Martin Barker heads up The Lord of the Rings International Audience Research Project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and based at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth. This major research initiative has not only provided the institutional platform from which these two volumes have sprung, but there is a third collection of essays edited by Barker and Mathijs, *Watching the Lord of the Rings*, to be published by Peter Lang this year, so completing its own trilogy! Meanwhile this emerging subfield of 'Lord of the Rings Studies' will be enriched by further forthcoming volumes, *Studying the Film Event: The Lord of the Rings*, edited by Sean Cubitt, Thierry Jutel and Harriet Margolis, featuring a more overtly New Zealand set of perspectives, and Kristin Thompson's *The Frodo Franchise*. The array of essays in *From Hobbits to Hollywood* and *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context* cover a great deal of ground in terms of the variety of conceptual and methodological approaches adopted and objects of study they embrace which range from the various manifestations of the film texts themselves (original theatrical to extended DVD versions) to the operations of global media corporations and from computer games to cultural policy in New Zealand. The two volumes are designed to complement each other and the central involvement of Mathijs in both collections helps to ensure that they are clearly differentiated in terms of content and general approach.

The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context, the more tightly organised and clearly structured of the two, is primarily concerned with what Mathijis calls 'the public presence of cinema', stating that 'It is only through its interactions with the mechanisms of production, distribution, reception and consumption that a film acquires any meaning for society' (p. 6). His introduction clearly articulates the general editorial strategy and, consequently, the volume is very usefully grouped into three sections dealing respectively with the political economy of the

2 Figures from Wikipedia. URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_highest-grossing_films [accessed 7 July 2007]. These rankings are based on box-office earnings unadjusted to take account of inflation. The adjusted figures place the films at seventh, thirteenth and seventeenth, respectively.

production, distribution and exhibition of the trilogy; a variety of reception contexts from newspaper and other critical reviews to the response of fans; and with a range of ancillary phenomena from official theatrical trailers via games, location guidebooks and soundtracks to softcore pornographic parody. Collectively, the essays locate the films within a rich network of analytic concerns that in turn contribute productively to broader debates and issues within film and media studies. Of particular interest is the detailed and dense illustration provided by the uniformly impressive essays comprising the first section of the book, examining the economic and political dimensions of 'the new international division of cultural labour' driving the global motion picture entertainment industry.[3] This not only embraces the business practices of the Hollywood majors with particular regard to the high-concept, big-budget blockbuster, it also includes a welcome consideration, by New Zealand academics Jennifer Lawn and Bronwyn Beatty, of the role of national cultural and fiscal policy in helping to facilitate the production of *The Lord of the Rings*. With the active assistance of the New Zealand government, New Line Cinema was able to defray one third of the production costs against tax, a level of support that was crucial in the decision to base the production in New Zealand in the first place. Moreover, had the films been a commercial failure then the tax credits advanced would have been unrecoverable.

Given the ramifications of this kind of covert underwriting of US corporate business activities, which puts a rather different perspective on New Zealand involvement in the project, it is regrettable that *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context* fails to include a more searching and critical analysis of contemporary international film financing and what entities derive most benefit. None of the essays even mentions the German tax shelter deals, arranged through the investment company Hannover Leasing, which accounted for a further 50% of the production costs of the trilogy and are the reason why Deutschland Filmproduktion GmbH & Co. are listed as one of the production companies of *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King* alongside New Line Cinema, Jackson's Wingnut Films and the Saul Zaentz Company which licensed the film rights they purchased from the Tolkein estate to New Line. The exploitation of this lucrative tax loophole – which also helped to finance a raft of other Hollywood films such as *Mission Impossible 2, Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* and *Shallow Hal* – was finally closed in 2005. It is arguably of greater significance to *The Lord of the Rings* phenomenon than the critical reception of the trilogy in Germany, a topic which is considered in the volume. The scale and scope of *The Lord of the Rings*, enhanced by the sheer array of ancillary spinoffs examined in the third part of the volume, also inevitably downplays the relative transience of any product in the entertainment industry, however epic. Since *The Return of the King* was released, Peter Jackson's own 'Hobbit-like' persona as a modest and down-to-earth Kiwi, a key element in the promotion of *The Lord of the Rings* in certain contexts, has also

3 See Toby Miller, Nitin Govil, John McMurria, Richard Maxwell and Ting Wang (eds), *Global Hollywood 2* (London: British Film Institute, 2005).

been diminished by behaviour that appears much more consistent with the self-interested egocentrism of a corporate player. Factors include his on going lawsuit against New Line Cinema claiming underpayment of up to US$100 million,[4] his considerable weight loss and media reports of an increasingly reclusive and eccentric lifestyle at his rural mansion with its ornamental lake, steam trains and vintage aircraft. Moreover, beyond the boost that Jackson's activities have given to the quality of special effects and postproduction facilities available to local as well as runaway productions, his impact on most New Zealand filmmaking, and certainly on any meaningful concept of New Zealand national cinema, has been extremely limited, and certainly if compared to the way in which the activities of Lars von Trier, for example, have galvanised Danish filmmaking. But unlike the maverick and radical von Trier, Jackson operates firmly within the new international division of cultural labour. His 2005 remake of *King Kong* landed his backers Universal a subsidy of NZ$48.6 million, or a sum more than four times the annual amount of public money invested by the New Zealand Film Commission in local production.

From Hobbits to Hollywood takes a very different approach in its primary concern with questions of politics (of a rather different order) and aesthetics, informed by the editors' assertion that 'Like other cultural artifacts a film leads a double life as *objet d'art* and public statement about the world' (p. 3), considerably enhanced in this case by the high profile of the trilogy in global popular culture. Consequently this time the contributions range from readings of the films in relation to the politics of contemporary international relations (most notably the war on terror), race, gender, class, sexuality and the family to considerations of various aesthetic and technological issues including genre, narrative, performance, production and sound design and digital special effects. While containing valuable nuggets of interpretative insight and technical analysis, this is on the whole a less coherent and satisfying collection. The mobilization of politics in relation to a trilogy of film texts whose global significance is clearly flagged from the start is ultimately restricted to western liberal orthodoxy. Consequently, despite forceful and cogent interpretations of *The Lord of the Rings* that foreground certain problematic political, racial and even religious connotations, there are no contributions from an Arab, third-world or non-Judaeo-Christian perspective, let alone a specifically Maori critique of films in which the 'colonized' tribal lands of New Zealand's first people function as digitally enhanced backdrops for a reworking of a quintessentially northern European fiction, with any non-white local actors invariably cast as demonic and savage Orcs or Uruk Hai. While it is unfair to ask Mathijs and Pomerance to bear the weight of the culturally limited perspective of western film and media studies, they do however have responsibility for the other main weakness of the volume, which is the absence of a clear structure, in spite of their assertion that the collection is organized in terms of a gradual shift in emphasis from the political to

4 Figure quoted by Ross Johnson, 'The Lawsuit of the Rings', *The New York Times*, 27 June 2005.

the aesthetic. The relative lack of cohesion is confirmed by the fact that some of the essays, such as those on merchandising by Ian Conrich and on fandom by Jennifer Brayton, could just have easily been included in the other volume. The absence of defined sections exacerbates the problem, making it difficult for the more insightful and informative contributions – such as those on ecology and aesthetics by Sean Cubitt, on architecture and set design by Steven Woodward and Kostis Kouelis, on digital software by Kirsten Moana Thompson and on the figure of Gollum by Tom Gunning – to stand out from the crowd. It also exacerbates the inevitable tendency towards the repetition of certain facts and critical judgements, common to both volumes, given the limited subject matter, but much more of a noticeable problem here. More judicious editing and a clearly defined structure would have made *From Hobbits to Hollywood* a far more engaging and useful contribution to our critical understanding of these monumental works of popular culture.

Amanda D. Lotz, *Redesigning Women: Television after the Network Era*. Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006, 224 pp.

LISA WILLIAMSON

In *Television after TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, Lynn Spigel notes that if the term 'TV' has come to refer to the various technologies, industrial formations, government policies and viewing practices associated with the medium in its classical public service and three-network era, then it would appear that 'we are now entering a new phase of television – the phase that comes after "TV"'.[1] It is this 'post-television', or rather 'post-network', period that Lotz's institutional analysis of female-centred drama in the US is concerned with. In a multichannel environment that 'privileges the targeting of niche tastes and narrowcasting' (p. 7), she sets out to explore the way in which changing industrial practices have led to the proliferation across broadcast and cable networks of female-centred dramas and to the expansion of competing cable networks explicitly targeting women.

Taking as her starting point the furore surrounding the broadcast of *Ally McBeal* in 1997, Lotz acknowledges that feminism lies at the heart of her project. Yet despite citing the various debates that emerged over whether or not the title character of Ally could be considered a (post) feminist role model, she nevertheless refuses to come down on either side, instead describing her feminist critique as somewhat 'ambivalent' (p. 22). This ambivalence is largely due to her uneasiness regarding the traditional role-model framework that originally informed some of the earliest US scholarship on gender and media. Drawn from mass communication studies and based primarily on content analysis, the role-model framework seeks to document the limited range of women's representations on offer, either in terms of their 'underrepresentation in televisual worlds' or in their confinement to specific roles, such as wife,

1 Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (eds), *Television after TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 2.

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Screen 48:3 Autumn 2007
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doi:10.1093/screen/hjm043

mother, or love interest (p. 11). Although aware that this method of feminist television scholarship has since been challenged by both psychoanalytical and cultural approaches, she suggests that role-model research not only continues to frame discussions about women and the media but also plays a dominant factor in influencing US public policy. As a result of this enduring and problematic legacy, representations of women on television are often considered simplistically in either positive or negative terms, with the former signalling a progressive, feminist and thus 'preferred' approach.

The complex and contradictory nature of *Ally McBeal* throws into sharp focus the limitations of this method of study, while questioning its overall value. Not only does it lack the tools necessary for exploring the sophisticated narratives created within such programming, it also fails to address the institutional structures surrounding its production and the historical context in which it is situated. What interests Lotz about the shift towards female characters and audiences at the end of the 1990s is not the plurality of programmes on offer *per se*, but rather the multiplicity of series types available and the diversity of stories dealt with in individual shows. This can be attributed to the emergence of a multichannel environment characterized by fierce competition and the subsequent value placed on niche segments of the audience. While female characters have been foregrounded in the past (most notably in the 1970s with the arrival of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *Charlie's Angels* and *Wonder Woman*, to name but a few), they were largely confined to the sitcom and action-adventure genres and thus circulated limited images and stories. Moreover, the latter form in particular featured women who were either controlled by male characters or dressed up in elaborate costuming which emphasized their femininity. This is not the case in the post-network era. The turn to narrowcasting, brought on by the need to target clearly defined segments of the audience, has resulted in female audiences being constructed as heterogeneous and diverse rather than as a monolithic group. The recognition that different women possess a varied range of interests, tastes and values has had a direct influence on the type of programming produced.

It is for this reason that Lotz eschews both the quantitative measures of the 'role-model' framework and the more text-based, theoretical mode of analysis derived from film studies in favour of what she terms a 'synthetic' approach, primarily drawn from British cultural studies (p. 18). Rather than seek out binary representations of women or focus on texts at the expense of production processes, this approach advocates the creation of a multiplicity of images in order to make stereotypes 'uninhabitable' while situating the programmes themselves within a 'critical historical, cultural and industrial context' (pp. 17–8). As regards the latter point, it seems to me that it is becoming increasingly necessary for scholarship to acknowledge the broader institutional context in which programmes are produced and transmitted, particularly in relation to US programming. For example, any analysis of *The Sopranos* or *Deadwood*

would appear incomplete without a discussion of the institutional status of the pay-cable channel HBO. As Lotz herself notes, the expansion of female-centred dramas and female-targeted networks has been made possible due to the evolving institutional structures of US television, and these changes demand that we 'interrogate [the] inherited scripts for evaluating media' (p. 7). This echoes Jason Mittell's work on television genre, in which he argues that instead of importing existing theories from literature, film and communication studies, television scholars must engage with methods that account for the specificities of the medium. While for Mittell this means considering how genre definitions are influenced by 'forces outside generic texts',[2] such as changing cultural circumstances, industrial motivations and audience practices, Lotz admits that her use of the term 'drama' relies on a much less sophisticated textual classification (p. 30). Focusing on narrative, she largely avoids the problem of genre while also failing to address the question of aesthetics, two areas that would have enhanced her overall analysis. Furthermore, although I found her examination of the brand strategies utilised by the cable networks Lifetime, Oxygen and Women's Entertainment both interesting and insightful, she fails to link concretely the differing structures and identities of broadcast and cable channels with her analysis of individual programmes.

The female-centred narratives discussed in the book are divided into four sections: the action drama, the comedic drama, the protagonist-centred family drama and the workplace/mixed-sex ensemble. As previously noted, the action-adventure series was part of a programming trend in the 1970s in which female characters were brought to the fore. However, despite this particular form having an established history, Lotz is careful to demonstrate the various ways in which post-network action dramas such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Xena: Warrior Princess* and *Charmed* differ from their 1970s action-adventure predecessors, combining complex characterization with the more typically generic elements of fantasy and spectacle. Her discussion of the way in which the characters obtain extraordinary physical abilities or superpowers through 'gyneco-centric legacies' is especially interesting. By bestowing powers on characters as part of a legacy only available to women, these programmes construct female gender as valuable while seeking to 'disempower men through exclusion, disinviting them from identifying with the heroine by making it impossible to share her power' (pp. 76–7). This marks a shift from the controlling status afforded to male characters like Bosley and Charlie in the supposedly female-centred *Charlie's Angels*.

Unlike the action series, female-centred comedic dramas have stronger links to the 'new woman' and 'single girl' sitcoms that first appeared in the 1970s. Despite this, Lotz makes it clear that she has not included sitcoms in her analysis due to her belief that feminist scholarship has already dealt with the form in great depth. It is true that Patricia Mellencamp and Kathleen Rowe have each produced seminal studies of

2 Jason Mittell, *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture* (New York, NY, and London: Routledge, 2004), p. 6.

women in sitcom,[3] but as these are now rather outdated, any analysis of the effect that the changing institutional environment has had on contemporary sitcom would be of value. That said, it is understandable that this objective may have been beyond the scope of the book. In her examination of the comedic dramas *Ally McBeal* and *Sex and the City*, Lotz deals with some of the controversies that she initially raised in her introductory chapter. While *Ally McBeal* is named after a single character and *Sex and the City* positions Carrie Bradshaw as its central narrator, both shows feature 'an extensive range of female characters who exhibit complex and contradictory identities' (p. 104). This shift, from the single-woman story to narratives that depict multiple female perspectives, expands the points of identification for female viewers and makes it increasingly difficult to locate female characters that fit the 'ideal' type sought by the role-model framework. In addition, the sophisticated and complicated narratives put forward by these texts, along with the shifts in tone between comedy and drama, mean that generalizations are almost impossible. Analyses of individual episodes must acknowledge the specific season from which each is taken along with its place within the overall series if the subtleties and intricacies of the narrative are to be understood.

What is striking about the majority of the programmes examined in this book is that they revolve almost exclusively around white, middle-class characters. While US television has always had a problem incorporating stories and images about lower and working-class characters into its programming (largely due to a commercial logic that positions the middle-class viewer as desirable), the lack of ethnic minority characters on television has become increasingly untenable. Lotz briefly touches upon this in her discussion of the significance of place in the protagonist-centred family drama. With the cities and towns of New England being the preferred setting for a number of these series, *Any Day Now* offers a variation by featuring an African–American lead character who returns to her hometown of Birmingham, Alabama, for her father's funeral and decides to stay on to continue his civil rights law practice. Lotz suggests that the programme 'uses the setting of Birmingham in the 1960s and the 1990s to introduce the past and present reality of racism in American society' (p. 123), but unfortunately her analysis of race goes no further, and she opts instead to consider problems related to characters returning to their childhood home. This absence is even more notable when she turns her attention to workplace/mixed-sex ensembles, a form that has historically provided a wider ethnic mix. The fact that the book fails to tackle this issue directly is problematic, especially considering the way in which Lotz aligns herself with 'postfeminism' in her introduction. Citing bell hooks and Ann Brooks,[4] amongst others, she describes postfeminism as a conceptual shift from debates around 'equality' to debates around 'difference' in the form of gender, race, class or sexual orientation. It is for this reason that

3 See Patricia Mellencamp, 'Situation comedy, feminism, and freud: discourses of Gracie and Lucy', in Charlotte Brunsdon, Julie d'Acci and Lynn Spigel (eds), *Feminist Television Criticism: a Reader* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997); Kathleen Rowe, *The Unruly Woman: Gender and Genres of Laughter* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995).

4 See bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981); Ann Brooks, *Postfeminisms: Feminism, Cultural Theory and Cultural Forms* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997).

I expected her analysis to engage with these issues in a more in-depth manner.

Overall, however, *Redesigning Women: Television after the Network Era* offers a welcome contribution to the study of US television in terms of the impact that the changing institutional environment has had on programme production and on the proliferation of female-centred dramas about and for women. Focusing on the way in which competition for a similar audience demographic can result in 'innovative' rather than 'derivative' programming, Lotz's study can be viewed as an important starting point from which to develop work that offers more detailed assessments of series within a particular institutional and historical context.

Contributors

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Notes to Contributors

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3. Monika Treut, 'Female misbehaviour', in Laura Pietrapaolo and Ada Testaferri (eds), *Feminisms in the Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 106–21.

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